

# ADAM

FACT • FICTION • HUMOR

2/-

OCTOBER, 1963

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RETURN TO GLORY  
—page 30



*See! No dandruff.*



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# ADAM

OCTOBER • 1963

Vol 35 • No 5

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# BOOBY-TRAPPED

FICTION • JAMES CAMPBELL

I had three suspects—a penniless demolition expert, a small-time head, and a ruthless female dedicated to killing. From there on I had to work partly by deduction and partly by hunch . . .

AS soon as I entered the room I knew someone had been. Someone skilled, too. Because that someone had checked everywhere for nearly-invisible threads. And having found them, he had substituted, before leaving, new unbroken threads. Yes, he had known his job all right—I'd had all my carefully hidden threads unbroken and immediately assume that the place was exactly as I had left it. But he hadn't bothered on one thing that I always kept a couple of pieces of thread hanging from two of the legs of the table. He'd seen those and had immediately concluded that they'd been bait, that somehow or another he hadn't seen the thread and that he had broken it. So he'd substituted a new one. And the second I saw that thread I knew I'd had a visitor.

I stood stock-still at the door, my eyes exploring the interior of the room. This character, as he'd been pretty expert in covering up that he'd been prowling about the room, was probably an expert in something else too—in installing a booby-trap. I mean, it tried—I'd had been out to give me the works directly he wouldn't have bothered to visit my room and then to try to cover up—he'd have caught me outside somewhere and got me then. Yes, everything pointed to the fact that a booby-trap had been rigged up inside. But where?

Now if you ever by any remote chance get to the stage when you suspect that somebody has installed a booby-trap in your room you certainly don't start looking for it! To the contrary, you take one



smart step backwards and you summon the police. But no, I couldn't summon the police. For just about two thousand reasons! And besides, I particularly wanted to find that booby-trap. Once I had found it I could render it harmless. And once I had done that maybe I could use the thing to catch whoever had planted it on me. It was vital that I do my utmost to ascertain who had installed it. If I didn't, he, or whoever he was working for, would try and try again to kill me. And sooner or later I'd end up on the marble slab. No doubt about it. I had to find out who'd rigged up that booby-trap.

But that of all I had to find the devilish thing itself. It could

be anywhere in the room. Absolutely anywhere. My eyes conducted a second exploratory tour while I stood there at the door. They saw nothing suspicious so I lifted my left foot to move into the room. It remained poised in mid-air before I hastily withdrew it. The carpet! I'd nearly stood on it before examining the thing. Two thin wires underneath a carpet, connected to the explosive. The weight of a foot on the pile causes the naked parts to make contact and . . . I felt faint. I knelt down and carefully—so very carefully—lifted the edge of the carpet. Then I had to grin, despite myself. The dust that arose proved just exactly how long ago it was since that car-



pot had been lifted, or adjusted, or moved in any way. So the carpet was definitely OK.

Next I moved to the small chest of drawers just to the left of the door. A booky-merchandise delight, a chest of drawers — you can enjoy so many variations. You can have them closed and make your connections so that when the victim opens one up he goes. Or you can leave one half-open so that when he shuts it the same thing happens. Or you can leave two just slightly open. He closes one, nothing happens — he closes the second and in doing so closes the contacts. And so on.

But the chest of drawers was safe. So, moving to the right, I began to examine my book-case.

Not a very likely place — the potential victim might go months without reading a book — but nevertheless it was essential to check it. I found it to be untouched.

On to the wash-hand basin. You'd easily spot any wires connected to the tap: I spotted none.

Halfway round the room by now, at the small recess which contained my bed. A careful and minute examination revealed nothing which might disturb my rest.

Then the small table at the window. As I was turning toward it I suddenly froze. I found that my throat had gone dry. For a full 30 seconds I stood there staring. Then I began cursing softly to

myself. What a fool! What a stupid panic-stricken fool! I almost deserved to get what had been laid on for me. For that phone on the table before me was the very very first thing I should have examined.

A phone is an admirable instrument for the rigging up of a lethal booky-trap. Almost made to measure. A simple connection with wires to the explosive and there's that. The phone itself supplies the current to detonate the charge. However, it's not very clever to fix it so that the moment the phone rings the charge goes off — the victim may not be anywhere near the thing when his number is dialled.

(Continued on page 22)



# BANDITS in BIKINIS

FACT • DON SALVER

A young American soldier led a villa-full of seductive, bikini-clad water sprites on an old-fashioned gangland-style raid against Germany's tank forces in Italy.

IT ended with 600 dead Nazis and a great Allied victory, but it started with an argument. "You're the only one who can do it," Lieutenant Colonel A. P. Dunwoody of the OSS reported firmly as he struggled to control his temper. "Go to Hell . . . sir," Pfc Louis

Santangelo replied without a moment's hesitation.

Dunwoody winced, mopped his sweating face and glanced across the oval-like office to USAF Maj Harold Larson.

"Privates don't speak that way to officers in this man's army," Larson snapped angrily.

"You can go to Hell, too, Major," said the GI.

"Are you psycho? We can send you to Leavenworth for this," Larson threatened.

"To Leavenworth? Sure — but not to play with the Mafia butchers of Sicily!" Santangelo countered.

The time — the blazing hot morning of June 23, 1943.

The place — OSS HQ in Rome, Tunisia.

The men — two perspiring intelligence officers and an lily-fairus GI.

The mission — Operation Harpoon, one of the most bizarre, most violent and most important spy and commando actions of World War II. Starting even to the "unconventional warfare" press of Major General "Wild Bill" Donovan's daring free-wheeling OSS Harpoon was an peculiar and ultimately that not one of the Allied military personnel involved liked it at all. The problem was how to knock out 110 German Tiger tanks concealed in an underground depot only three miles from the Martin beachhead where General George Patton's troops were to blast their



way across on the southern coast of Sicily. It was the proposed solution then — from the very beginning — based arguments and outbursts on an unprecedented scale. "Obscene," "ridiculous" and "utterly unacceptable" were some of the more charitable comments made to OSS brain-truster Danwoody when he first submitted the plan to the Joint Anglo-American Strategy Group on the eve of the Allied invasion of Sicily. "Gross pervade — and dirty!" was the more indignant judgment of one trait US general.

All this was true. Operation Harpoon was more preposterous than a "C" movie and more risky than playing poker with strangers, but neither of those were the reasons why Mac Donaghe believed so stubbornly when he first learned what Big, balding Danwoody and the crew-cut All-Force photo intelligence major wanted him to do. The 22-year-old private was not afraid — he was enraged.

"You're asking me to play footsie with gangsters and murderers!" he accused bitterly. "I left all that Mafia filth behind when I

pulled out of Illinois, and there's no power on earth can make me volunteer for that kind of a fool. Use your fancy hardware to clear the cave."

"No good," Danwoody confessed gloomily. "The reef is 80 feet of solid rock, and the Liberators and I's couldn't find it anyway because the camouflage is so good. Someone has to go in and you're elected."

"Nothing personal," Major Larsen added hastily, "but with your rather unusual family connections —"

The tall thin young soldier swore an ugly and ancient Sicilian oath, a curse that surprised him as much as it disturbed the two officers, for he thought that he'd forgotten it long ago. Lou Santangelo was a radio operator/gunner on a Sherman medium tank attached to the Third Armored, but he had not been chosen for this vital mission because of his military skills. He was the youngest son of one of the most notorious Mafia operators in the American Midwest, a ruthless millionaire who had attracted, bombed and outgunned his way to a

fortune over a heap of corpses. Although the lean GI had broken relations with his father four years earlier and moved away to California, it was this link with the Mafia that made him so special.

"No Allied team could reach that cave alone," the OSS officer pointed out realistically, "and only your Uncle Rocco can mobilize the so-called Brotherhood in the Liria region to help us."

"You've been reading too many comic books, colonel. He may be the boss there, but I've never even met him," the tanker replied.

"You're of his blood, and you're the son of a Mafia Don. That should be plenty for any Sicilian who calls himself a Mafioso," Danwoody explained patiently. As a former narcotics cop, the 41-year-old OSS agent knew a great deal about the mysterious international crime syndicate — but he was shrewd enough to realize that any mention of this would only make the moral young GI even more hostile.

There was a long silence. Suddenly, Larsen broke the stalemate with shock tactics. "Let's stop talking around. I'm



"Need? I thought you said these males a day?"

giving it to you straight," he told Santangelo. "We don't give a damn about how many people your old man killed, but we know that you will be murdering hundreds — maybe thousands — of your own buddies if you don't volunteer. Your division is slated to land the first waves at Lima."

The Pfc sighed as he realized that he had no choice.

"Okay, Okay. I hate your guts . . . sir . . . but I volunteer for Operation Harpoon," he surrendered.

That afternoon, Pfc Santangelo was introduced to the smiling, soft-spoken British explosives expert who was to be his partner. Lieutenant William Cedric Dixon was a veteran "opper" with an excellent sense of humor and an outstanding record of demolitions. Blond, Oxford-educated and urbane, Dixon was an explosives boy who really enjoyed his work.

"Should be a good show," he predicted nonchalantly as the four men went over the aerial photos and the sand-box model of the coastal cliffs west of the port of Lima.

"With more than 8000 German troops from the 15th Panzers all over the area? You must be out of your head," Lou Santangelo answered curtly.

"Piece of cake," the Englishman reassured them, "especially if the private obeys my orders."

Lt. Colonel Dunsoppy cleared his throat notably and lit another cigar.

"Ah . . . well, that's not exactly the spirit," he murmured. "For special reasons that must be obvious, you'll have to follow his orders. He's in command."

"To help me," gasped the startled British officer, who had never heard of a 23-year-old Pfc telling a lieutenant what to do.

"I don't like it any more than you do," the young GI declared.

Then they looked at each other, shrugged at the insanity of it all and shook heads. By this time, Lou Santangelo was convinced that the entire mission was unrealistic and he didn't care. He

wanted to get it over with as soon as possible.

By the time they boarded the Royal Navy submarine at 7:00 pm on the moonless night of the 25th, Santangelo and the good-humored Englishman were on first name terms. Dixon had the poise that a lifetime of wealth brings, plus the confidence that came from four previous sabotage jobs behind enemy lines. As the Undersea rider cruised north through the minefields and headed toward Shelly, Dixon slept easily with his head resting on the waterproof sack that concealed his 35 pounds of plastic explosives. Lou Santangelo listened to him snore, and the young American couldn't help but smile. "Willie" Dixon seemed like a sophisticated or silly fool, but it was clear that he had the guts of a 20th century Soviet Pioneer. The gangster's son had proved his own courage in a dozen tank battles from Kassarea Gap to the capture of Turin, but he was still uneasy about the weird project that OSS had code-named Operation Harpoon. Troubled by the awareness that he was a combat soldier with no cloak-and-dagger experience, he barely closed.

At 2:00 am the submarine poked up its periscope cautiously and the mustachioed skipper peered toward the Sicilian shore for some landmark.

After considerable study of the charts and recon photos, the naval officer concluded that they were about four miles from the rendezvous cove where the Underground agents were to meet them. Santangelo and the demolitions expert checked their gear as the undersea craft glided further west at a cautious five knots, and they barely had time to gulp down mugs





of hot tea laced with rum before a pink-checked ensign told them to mount to the spring tower.

It was nearly 4:00 am when the submarine slowly rose to the surface and a dozen snicker-shed sailors scampered quietly up the ladder to man the deck guns. Santangelo and the Royal Navy shipper followed a few moments later, studied the rocky coast thoughtfully and waited for the light signal that OSS had promised would appear. Nothing happened, and the tense young American began to sweat.

The five lean US armor veterans saw it. Four dots . . . two dashes . . . three dots . . . one dash. He tapped the naval officer on the arm as it was repeated, and the skipper raised his own blinker to flash back the prearranged counter-sign. A few minutes later, the two Allied agents were loading their socks into an inflated life raft tethered to the submarine. The sea was calm but the night was hot, and they were damp with perspiration by the time they cut the line and began paddling the quarter mile to shore.

Before they covered 100 yards, Lou Santangelo heard a purring splashing noise behind him and turned around swiftly. The undersea reader had submerged. The two spy-commandos were alone on the black-black surface of the ancient Mediterranean.

They stared furtively into the darkness of the cove, but could detect no movement. The American unbuckled his jacket, loosened the special alligator ID in his shoulder holster and wondered why he had ever left his solid steel-hulled tank. "Get ready," Dixon warned softly as the breakers spun the rubberized raft, and then their dimmy craft crunched on the sand of the beach.

Moving exactly as they had rehearsed, the two men jumped out and swiftly dragged the float up out of the water. Santangelo grabbed the rapidly firing Bren gun his partner handed him, sprinted 30 yards inland and took up a covering position behind two small boulders. The English demolition pros began to move the sacks away from the water, crawling low to offer the minimum silhouette to any enemy mechanism. It was all going smoothly, but there was still no sign of the Underground contact named "Pietro" who was supposed to meet them.

Suddenly, Santangelo smelled a strong provocative scent, creosote, kerosene, pure woman. He spun around instinctively with his finger on the trigger of his sub-machine-gun.

There she was.  
Five feet away.  
Slim and young and lovely.  
Perfect.

Smiling, with a .32 caliber Beret in submarine in her left hand and a flashlight in her right.

Not quite naked, but close enough to it in a handkerchief-sized bikini.

"Pittsburgh," she said in the musical voice of a teenage girl



"Would you mind pulling the shade down? How much do you think a guy can take?"

"Cleveland," he responded mechanically with the recognition supplied although he couldn't quite believe what he was seeing.

He stared at her angled beauty for a long moment — until she laughed.

"Pietro?" he asked incredulously.

"Oh, but you may call me Angela, Signor," she replied in heavily accented English.

Santangelo nodded to himself. It figured, Operation Harpoon—unlike from the beginning. Getting crazier every second. It was going to become a lot stranger before it was over. He smiled her lovely picture again, swallowed hard and waved back toward his partner. The Briton scuttled up from the shore quickly, took one comprehensive glance that surveyed every inch of her exquisite anatomy and grinned in friendly approval.

"Want you introduce me to your under?" While Dixon asked nonchalantly.

"This . . . this . . . is Pietro!"

The current young GI exploded.

"You Yankee certainly know how to fight a war, sir," the supper lieutenant countered with a mocking salute.

"This is not the time or place to talk, signor," the Sicilian girl interrupted. "Collect your gear and follow me at once. Come quickly, for these beaches are patrolled by Teutonic soldiers with dogs."

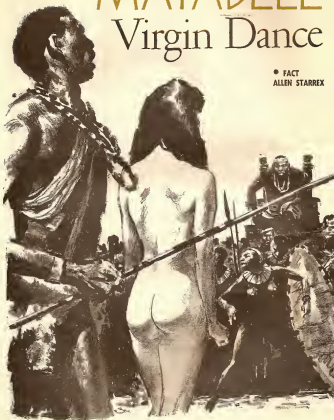
Her mention of German troops terminated the conversation abruptly. The two Allied operatives declined and consulted the raft, picked up their gear and obediently trailed after her to the path at the bottom of the cliff. Shapely Angela led the way up the narrow twisting route, and her swaying stride was so fascinating that Lou Santangelo had to force himself to concentrate on the hazardous being Operation Harpoon. Without warning, these abstract dangers became an urgent reality as the Sicilian beauty turned a corner in the trail and gasped.

(Continued on page 35)

# MATABELE

## Virgin Dance

• FACT  
ALLEN STARREX



Kurt and Eyvette van Brandt were the only outsiders ever to watch the pagan orgy of the Matsabale virgin dancers to celebrate King Labengula's "diamond" ritual.

THE staccato creak of the 20 drums split the humid African night air with the spluttering bark of a hundred handgans exploding in pre-arranged sequence.

With every slap of a drummer's hand on the drumhead there also came the rhythm of a warlike chant and the jangle of turban bells clapping against an undulating bamboo-tufted kilt of a white-plumed soldier of the stalwart Matsabale — the toughest fighter in Africa. The Matsabales were led by the conquest ruler, black or white, ever to live in the deep bush country of the Dark Continent.

To the trained eye of the blond, fair-skinned man who stood to one side of the whirling, dancing, chanting natives the scene unfolded as a terrifying, raging spectacle of the raw, alien culture of Africa. But the man wasn't looking at the drums or the

dance — he stared at something else.

Across the stockade stood a crude but strong cage, about 3 ft by 7 ft in diameter. Its spindly bamboo bars were secured by heavy strips of antelope hide. Inside the cage was a dark-skinned, fair-skinned young woman. Her long black hair, which was usually neatly tied back in a bun, now hung down the sides of her face, spread itself across her smooth shoulders and draped itself as a net over her bare bosom.

Like the blond man across the stockade, the girl's eyes were riveted on a single object. But, unlike him, she gazed at the far end of the huge, oblong structure. There blazed a row of six torches, flickering their firebeams down on an fantastic scene as ever witnessed by white men — or women. On a beautifully carved chair of ebony sat a huge, strongly clad man. On his head was a crown of leopard skin. The upper half of his body was naked, except for a flaming necklace which wound around his massive throat and fell in two strands down his chest.

His thighs were covered by the traditional bamboo-tufted kilt, which was the trademark of the Matsabale. He sat in the great ebony chair in regal splendor. In his right hand was a large powder mng, from which he tipped. His eyes lazily took in the entire spectacle before him. Then, as always, he turned his attention to some-

thing going on at the foot of the throne slaps.

To the wild tempo of the drums and the dancing, chanting, warlike of the Matsabale, with the finest specimens of the tribe's womanhood. They were the choice of the lot, the firm and youthful virgins whose beauty had given them great honor in this primitive society. They had been chosen as future wives of the greatest Matsabale of them all, the omnipotent Labengula, King-Emperor of the Matsabale and the most powerful potentate in all of Africa. He was considered by European powers as the last standing block to complete white conquest of the continent.

As Labengula peered down from his ebony throne, the young girls swooned to the savage beat of the drums, thighs flexing, bosoms glistening at the torchlight. This was the scene the girl in the cage was watching.

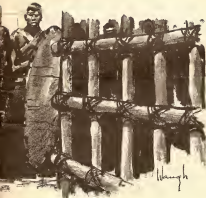
As the tempo of the drums increased, so did the movement of the virgins at Labengula's feet. In the cage, the girl's face contorted. Her lips parted back sharply, and she felt strange sensations flicking through her own body. She was torn by the blood of two continents, which at that moment were fighting a raging war within her. Her Christian name was Eyvette Broeckx. Her father had been a French soldier-adventurer who came to Africa for conquest and himself was conquered by a Zulu beauty. Broeckx, a man of honor as well as strength, defied the law of the white man and took a Zulu wife. Eyvette was the result.

Raised in a French school in the Congo, she was trained as a white and treated as one, because her father was a powerful man. At the age of 15 she married the blond man across the stockade. His name was Kurt von Brandt, and he was a Swiss-German engineer-explorer who had offered his services to an English genius named Cecil Rhodes. It was this service which had brought Eyvette and Kurt to this dangerous and terrible night.

Across the stockade Kurt suddenly uttered an oath in German and, with every muscle in his body, tried to move toward the cage. The effort failed, for Kurt was bound securely hand and foot to a 5-foot stake. The two Matsabale warriors who stood on either side of the young engineer paid little attention to his efforts. They knew he couldn't get away, and they continued to watch the dance, which now was reaching a climax.

The Matsabale warriors were forming ranks in the center of the stockade. They moved with rigid, rhythmic steps like lines 10 abreast, their song now reaching heroic proportions.

They were moving to the end-





"I wish you'd stop that screaming, I'm trying to sleep."

ence of the drums toward the throne area. To the right of the throne, on a raised platform covered with a hump mat, sat the Matsabe generals and wise men of the tribe. The were surrounded by a levy of lovely girls who poured ichikanda, a potent rice beer, into pewter mugs similar to the one used by Lobengula himself. The mugs were emptied at night at once after every din.

The signal was given. Lobengula's male secretary, who was dressed in a Western-style white cotton suit, snapped an order, and the pious de resistance of the evening's revelry was about to begin.

Lobengula rose stately from his ebony throne. Two of the king's nobles (royal guards) stepped forward to support the great ruler. He threw them off and, walking like a man on a tightrope, stepped over a living carpet of the prostrated bodies of the young virgins onto a second raised platform. The only place of furniture on the platform was a beautiful leopard-skin couch.

The famed Matsabe ritual of the diamonds was underway.

The drums changed tempo into a throbbing, steady roar as the dancers began a heavy lurching sidestep. Even the chant changed into a beseechful hum. Another order came from the secretary. Two warriors raced across the stockade straight for the cage. Kurt was yelling now, but he couldn't be heard above the din. He writhed under the pressure of the bonds, but he couldn't shake them off. His eyes were glazed with fear and hate, and he struggled against unbearable odds. He was trapped. But he kept his glazed eyes on his wife in the cage across the arena.

The two warriors had reached the cage now, and quickly untied the ropes holding the bars. The girl stepped back almost to the rear of the cage, but she didn't cower. She stood straight, her back arched and her eyes wide as the warriors' nimble hands opened the barred cage door.

The cage open, the warriors suddenly stepped back, one on either side. Without a word the girl stepped between them, and the three moved toward the platform on which King Lobengula

lay stretched on his leopard couch. The girl walked stately, the roaring drums matching her steps. The two Matsabe warriors kept pace, but dropped slightly behind her.

As she reached the platform, she turned, and for a moment she looked straight at her husband tied to the stake. Her face was a mask.

Kurt screamed again, but the drums drowned out the cry.

As the girl turned back to the platform, two of the young Matsabe virgins quickly spread a second leopard skin mat to, but slightly below, the one occupied by the king.

The girl, her black hair shining and her white body gleaming with perspiration, stepped forward and lay full-length on the leopard skin. As she did so, the Matsabe virgins stepped forward. Both the king and the white woman were unclothed with a perfume prepared from sandalwood and oil.

Now a dozen members of the royal guard began unlocking a battery of ancient iron safes which lined the back wall of the royal chamber. As the heavy doors creaked open on their rusty hinges, thousands of glittering, urent blue-white diamonds spilled into waiting sacks. From other safes, additional thousands of British sovereigns came pouring out.

As a guard filled his goshawk sack, he would run to the platform. There he poured the jewels and gold coins in heaps over the reclining monarch; others did the same to the white girl at his side. Within minutes both were virtually buried beneath the treasure.

Only the rise and fall of their breathing indicated they were alive. High above the din was a new chant, this one from the platform filled with generals and wise men. They chanted the king's virtues and extolled his unmatched wealth.

The drums pounded savagely, so wildly that any rancore was lost. There was nothing but a massive boom of hands on drumheads and the screams of the chant. Two arch bearers moved forward and placed their blazing lights at each end of the platform. The piles of diamonds and gold shot glittering sparks across the stockade.

The larger pile on the couch suddenly crumpled. The king burst through his "diamond grave" and stood on the couch, the diamonds and gold still covering him up to his knees. As he spread his arms to the heavens, the drums rolled out one last resounding boom and the warriors screamed a final tribute. Lobengula the magnificent, Lobengula the undefeatable, was in his glory.

The big monarch stepped across the glittering pile and probed beneath the one covering the white woman. Slowly, almost tenderly, he scooped away the stones and helped her to her feet.

just as the drama and the chest abruptly ended. As the two stood quietly in the torchlight, only the sob of Kurt, tied to the stake, could be heard in the compound.

Lobengula bowed to the women. She returned the courtesy. The king uttered a command and the girl was led away. But not to the cage she had occupied before. She went instead to a thatch-covered house at the far end of the compound. There, a woman slave bathed her and left her to sleep on a couch of fur.

Back in the centre of the stockade, the two Matabele warriors guarding Kurt cut him loose from the stake and led him quietly to the hut occupied by his wife. The man looked down at the girl sleeping peacefully on the fur pallet. She breathed evenly, deeply. There was a smile on her face.

Kurt wept openly as he dropped beside her. And then, strangely, he too slept.

Kurt and Eyvette von Brandt had participated in the most fantastic pagan ceremony ever carried out in Africa. It was so strange, so horrifying in its implications, that neither could fully comprehend. Only Eyvette's Kuts blood had answered its call.

They had come as emissaries, bearing gifts of gold from Cecil Rhodes. Lobengula had promised that no harm would come to them.

They had left the headquarters of Rhodes' great Kimberley mine to travel deep into the Matabele bush. They had been secretly cut off the side when the Matabele produced the cage. The natives had fallen on von Brandt, stripped and bound him. Eyvette had



"Go to hell!"

been placed in the cage.

They had entered Lobengula's capital city as prisoners, expecting the worst. Now, after the strange and terrible night of the diamond ritual, they slept an untroubled sleep.

Lobengula also slept, surrounded by his wives and slaves. He was undisputed king of a great domain. And he was still the bul-

work of African independence. Lobengula's fame was so great, in fact, that Britain's Queen Victoria corresponded with him and sent him an autographed picture of herself on one occasion and an opiate chair on another.

A man of massive frame, Lobengula was also a fearless fighter and a stern monarch. To symbolize his authority and enforce discipline among his subjects, he frequently resorted to mass purges of the Masi sect, dispatching recalcitrant tribesmen with the royal assegai, the symbol of sovereignty. Although he was considered only semi-civilized, Lobengula displayed a marked capacity for governing his people and possessed a shrewd political skill in dealing with whites.

Lobengula secretly distrusted the whites, but he allowed them to come into his country and treated them in a friendly fashion as long as they obeyed his laws and respected his sovereignty. The Matabele king had a great respect for Cecil Rhodes, who appeared to be less ruthless than other invaders of Africa.

But more than anything else, Lobengula was interested in Rhodes' diamond mines at Kimberley, the world's richest diamond fields, discovered the year Lobengula was made king.

Lobengula's method of obtaining a large share of these diamonds, his wicked "diamond rites" and the accumulation of wealth beyond that of any other ruler in Africa at the time, all make for a fascinating story, and one familiar to nearly every South African schoolboy.

(Continued on page 50)



"You did call at an awkward time. I was just about to give baby a bottle!"

# "HE'S TOO GOOD—

So said a heavyweight fighter some 35 years ago when he received a hard right to the jaw. And this is only one of the many comical incidents related around the ringside . . .

It was the most terrific fight on record, this fight between two legless men. The idea of it was revealing — the outcome of it was disastrous.

The fight took place in Melbourne as the 1870s and was the brain-child of a politician named Stemple, an Englishman who came to Australia, made his fortune with sheep, set himself up in a hotel and indulged in his passion of boxing. His participation in the sport took the form of backing his favorites. He made quite a lot of money backing Bill Farnan who became the first heavyweight glove champion of Australia by knocking out Peter Jackson in three rounds. But Stemple lost a lot of money in repeatedly backing Starlight, a popular fighter who fought every body and beat practically nobody.

A customer at Stemple's pub was a man named Jack Stakly who prided himself as a ball-puncher. Stakly had a deep chest, broad shoulders and remarkable agility — considering he had no legs from the knees down!

He had lost his legs as an accident — a rockfall had crashed his pins — and had leather caps fitted to the stumps. He was described as a "badly abbreviated man".

There arrived in town a Jamaican negro named Sambo who had been run over in New York by a train, the accident causing him to lose his legs below the knees. Sambo was a beggar who did shoe-shining when he could and lived on the generosity of others when business was slack. He arrived in Melbourne on a tramp steamer.

Stemple heard of him and the idea of a boxing match between Sambo and Stakly immediately appealed to the whimsy side of his nature. Quietly and quietly the match was arranged — quickly, in case Sambo left these shores — quietly, because the contest would not have been allowed by law.

A ring was pitched in a barn at the rear of Stemple's hotel. A crowd of 20 attended to witness the bout.



An artist's impression of the fight between John L. Sullivan and John Klutas, which took place on July 8, 1889. The last of the bare knuckle heavyweight championships, Sullivan won by KO in the 73rd round.

The men, stripped to the waist, with white trunks extending to the leather caps of their stumps and streamers about their waists, presented a strange, abhorrent, yet fascinating picture. Both were tired but so short.

The referee was the editor of a local newspaper. The fight was to be conducted under Queensberry Rules. Each wore two-ounce gloves.

From the start it could be seen that Stakly was by far the more scientific, but the negro seemed to have more strength and ferocity. For the first two minutes of the first round Sambo stood on uncertain supports, swinging both hands. Stakly withstood the onslaught, parrying the blows and occasionally scoring with counter punches.

A right to the nose dropped Sambo flat on his back. He sat up immediately and placing his gloved hand on the floor, swung his body clear and dropped onto his stumps.

The second, third, fourth and fifth rounds were savagely contested, with knockdowns frequent and points about even. In the sixth round Stakly drove a left to Sambo's mouth, knocking out several teeth and bouncing the black man onto one of the ring posts.

As Sambo bounced back off the post, Stakly uprooted him, breaking his jaw. Sambo went down but bounced up in a rage. Crazed, he scrambled toward his opponent on hands and stumps. The referee called to him, "That's bad fighting!" But Sambo ignored him. As he came up to Stakly, he grappled

with him, then deliberately pressed his right thumb into Stakly's left eye, gouging it almost out.

In agony, Stakly let out a scream, fastened his teeth into Sambo's neck and bit deeply and tore out a piece of flesh. The negro's blood spurted across the ring. The referee, seconds and spectators leaped into the ring and dragged the cripples apart.

Fortunately, there was a doctor in the audience. His prompt action saved Sambo from bleeding to death, but Stakly's eye could not be saved.

It took all Stemple's influence to keep the bout a secret. Both boxes were kept in seclusion for several weeks until their wounds healed. Sambo was given a few pounds and shipped to New Zealand. Stakly was "handsomely provided for" by Stemple and a few other rich men who attended the gruesome spectacle.

Boxing history is studded with original fights and unusual incidents, though fortunately there is no record of any disposition of the Stakly-Sambo battle. But October 4, 1923 is a date that Mike McTigue always remembered. Mike was an Irishman who won the world light-heavyweight title from the hated Sonergilve Bettinger 210.

Poor, illiterate 210 defended his title against McTigue in Dublin on St. Patrick's Day, 1923. Reports leaving Dublin said that McTigue won a clear points decision, and possibly he did, but 210 did receive warnings prior to the fight.

Running up a phenomenal re-

# I QUIT!"

SPORT • RAY MITCHELL



Jack Dempsey, the gladiator of Toledo, is the champion of his generation — black derby and fur-collar coat.

cord in Georgia was a young man named Young Striking, who, at the time of McTigue's coronation, was a light-heavyweight. A syndicate of men in Columbus, Georgia, wanted to give Striking his chance at the world title, so Mayor Paul Jones, a member of the syndicate, went to New York to get McTigue's signature on a contract.

McTigue's manager, Joe Jacobs, was a throwed man with a dollar. He also was a cautious work. He explained the offer made to McTigue, made some counter offers regarding money and referee, then accepted the fight.

Jones agreed to the terms, one of which was that Jacobs take his own referee, a custom in those days.

The party arrived in Columbus a few days before the bout but McTigue injured his hand and asked for a postponement. Jones said he would send a doctor to McTigue's room to examine the hand and if the doc said there was need for a postponement, such postponement would be granted.

Late that afternoon, seven men entered McTigue's room. All claimed to be doctors. All pronounced the hand. All pronounced it OK. McTigue protested. He was told to look out of the window.

Puzzled, the champion did so. Outside he saw a tree with a rope over a bough — at the end of the rope was a noose. A few men stood around and nodded at the tree.

McTigue was annoyed, more than afraid. He ordered the men out of the room and said if they did not grant a postponement,



Light-heavyweight Young Striking was awarded the fight against Mike McTigue in Georgia on October 4, 1923, when the Klu Klux Klan changed the decision against McTigue.

there would not be a fight.

Soon afterwards McTigue heard noise outside. He looked out and saw men carrying placards, which read: "Fight, or fight. No fight and you leave Columbus in a box."

Savagely, McTigue said he would fight, providing a doctor gave him a needle to deaden the pain. This was done.

It was not a particularly good fight and at the end of the bout the referee, Harry Kittle, looked to Joe Jacobs for instructions. Jacobs waved his hands across his body, signalling a draw, a verdict which would keep McTigue's title for him and save a riot. Kittle awarded a draw but the verdict did not save a riot. Klu Klux Klan members moved menacingly toward the ring and Mayor Jones hastily changed the verdict to a win for Striking. The crowd cheered their "champion." Kittle, McTigue and Jacobs left Columbus as fast as possible.

Once out of town, Kittle called New York newspapers that McTigue and Striking had boxed a draw. That was the official verdict and that is how it appears in the record books.

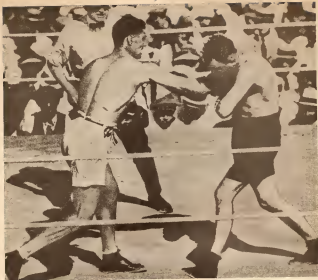
Another out-of-town fight featuring a world champion brought repercussions which will live longer than McTigue's clash with the KKK. That was the bout between Jack Dempsey and Tommy Gibbons at a small town named Shelby, in Montana, on American Independence Day, 1923. Shelby tried to show its independence that day but it was not of age.

Sam Sampson was the man who had the brasserie to match Dempsey in a world title fight at Shelby. Sam had his hour of glory — and he had a lifetime of regret.

Sam was a shoekeeper in Shelby, a town with 300 inhabitants. He thought Shelby had a future and he thought the best way to make people conscious of the existence of the town was to promote a world heavyweight title fight.

Sam put Shelby on the map, all right. It became as well known as Chicago or New York. But...

The townspeople of Shelby called a meeting. Everyone was keen on the idea and in eight days a sum of \$25,000 (Australian) was raised. Then the Mayor asked Jack Kearns, Dempsey's manager, what money he wanted for



Dempsey to defend his title against Tommy Gibbons, a leading contender, Kearns wanted \$60,000 — and refused to bargain. Gibbons said he would accept 50 percent of the gate after Dempsey was paid.

In three weeks an arena was built. It was big enough to hold 40,000 persons. Then Kearns demanded his \$60,000 in advance. The demand panicked Shelby and portion of the money was offered to Kearns.

Kearns accepted the portion of the guarantee on the provision that the whole proposition was handed to him and his friend Dan McKettrick. Shelby had to agree.

Came the night of the fight. The box office had \$28,000. This sum, plus the \$25,000 already given to Kearns represented Dempsey's guarantee. The crowd was smaller than anticipated.

The fight was not spectacular. Dempsey won on points — the only time in his career that he fought as many as 15 rounds in one fight.

The citizens of Shelby were faced with an unpaid-for arena and no return from the fight — Dempsey and his party had the lot.

The fight that broke the banks at Shelby, Missouri, on Independence Day (July 4), 1923. Jack Dempsey (left) outpointed Tommy Gibbons over 15 rounds.

Gibbons gained nothing but experience. Dempsey, Kearns and McKettrick slept the night in a basement beneath a shop — with an armed guard on the door. At dawn next day the trio, accompanied by the sheriff and his deputy, went to the railway station where the visitors hired a one-carriage train to take them out of Shelby.

Shelby was not lucky enough to get just nothing out of the fight. The citizens were in hook up to their eyebrows. The town's three banks went broke. The town never regained its small prosperity.

Yes, Shelby was put on the map — and off it. But it did become well known!

From one of the greatest of heavyweight champions to one of the greatest flyweight champions is a big hop in weight, but the flyweight champion in question — Jimmy White — also figured in a

fight where his opponent received no money. That fight took place in England on January 31, 1923. His opponent was Pete Herman.

Two Americans conceived the idea of making White, the Welsh singer who held the world flyweight title (weight limit eight stone six), with American Herman who held the world bantamweight title (weight limit eight stone six). The Yanks knew that such a bout held in England would draw a full house at big prices. So they hired the Royal Albert Hall, London, and guaranteed each fighter \$8000 — with Herman's bantam title at stake.

White — cautious soul — insisted that his \$8000 be deposited in his bank account. He signed his contract after the money matter was settled. Herman also was a cautious soul — but in another way. He defended his title against fellow American Joe Lynch on December 22, 1920 — three weeks before the scheduled White fight.

Herman lost his title to Lynch — or did he just loan it until after his return from England? Because after the White bout Herman returned to America and beat Lynch for the title!

Of course, there was quite a



now when Lynch reached London without the title. The promoters pointed out that Pete was supposed to defend his title against White and how could he do that when he didn't have it?

"A non-title fight does not draw as much money as a title fight," the promoters pointed out to Herman. "No," they said, "we'll pay you only £1000."

"The contract calls for £2000," protested Herman.

"Sure it does," agreed the promoters. "The whole thing will look good in court. The contract calls for you to defend your title against White. Now you haven't a title. You broke the contract." Herman saw the point and agreed to £1000...payable after the fight.

That seemed to end that, but on the day of the fight Herman told the promoters that he wanted his money before the fight or there would be no fight. He said too, that unless he got the full £2000 on the spot, there still would be no fight.

The promoters began to sweat. It was one thing calling off the fight a couple of weeks beforehand — it was another cancelling it on the day of the bout, with all the tickets sold. They agreed. Herman demanded cash. They didn't have it with them. Would Pete take a cheque? Yes, Pete had to be satisfied with a cheque.

Herman grabbed the cheque and went to the bank. It was after 3 pm — the bank was closed.

That night White, hopped onto the scales and tipped the beam at seven stone four — his usual weight. He asked to see Herman weighed. The promoters told him Pete had weighed in at two o'clock

and that he weighed 83.

White protested. He pointed out that the contracts called for a singleweight.

"He does," agreed the promoters, "but Herman would not sign unless he weighed in at two o'clock."

White fumed. He knew that Herman would enter the ring at about 8.15. He flatly refused to fight.

The promoters began to panic. Another big fight was billed for that program — between British heavyweight Bombardier Billy Bevis and American Battling Levinsky, former world light-heavyweight champion — and the fight fell through, the crowd being notified to that effect only after they had taken their seats.

Word quickly spread that White had refused to fight. A riot was imminent. At that point the Prince of Wales sent word to White that he wanted to see the fight. "For the Prince I will fight," said Jimmy and out he went to the ring.

White looked sick. When the Prince saw that he advised the Mighty Atom not to fight, but White was adamant.

Jimmy White was a spent force. No longer was he the winner he had been and in the 17th round the referee stopped the fight, carried Jimmy to his corner and said to him: "Jimmy, you never did know when to stop down."

The next morning at 10 o'clock, Pete Herman presented his cheque at the bank. The cheque bounced! Herman raced out looking for the promoters. They too, had bounced — right out of England. Herman never did get his money.

White was concerned in another

fight with unusual midlights. That was against British featherweight Joe Conn who weighed nine stone. Conn was considered the best featherweight in England, even though he wasn't champion.

The bout was booked for August 21, 1918. But there was a fly in the ointment — White was in the Army, thus he could receive no money from a fight. Of course, Jimmy refused to fight without payment.

Then someone had a brainwave — why not give Mrs White a parcel of diamonds — £2000 worth? Jimmy agreed.

But a further hitch occurred — the British Police went out on strike on the day of the fight! It was the first and only time it happened in England. How could the traffic be controlled? Who would control the crowds going to the fight?

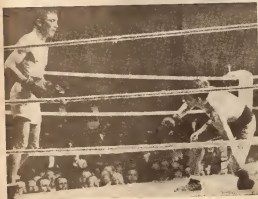
The promoter pulled a few strings and on the night of the fight 700 soldiers from military hospitals did police duty.

White won the fight by a knock-out in the 12th round. Mrs White received her £2000 in diamonds and everybody was happy. The day after the fight Mrs White traded her diamonds for £2000 in cash.

It gives us a good feeling when we do good turns for others. Sam Russell, former British light, later referee, was one who got that feeling often. He raised thousands of pounds for charities.

He was a kind governor of several hospitals. So when he saw former fighter Alf Mansfield down on his back, Sam experienced that familiar glow — he would help Alf.

Mansfield had been a good



The Prince of Wales sent word to Jimmy White that he wanted to see his match with Pete Herman (left). Herman won hands down—but collected no money!

fighter — he had lasted 30, 10 and 18 rounds with Wilde. Now he was blind and broke. Russell told Mansfield that he would run a benefit for him. Mansfield was overjoyed. Sam made the arrangements. He was given the London Pavilion, rent free, by C. B. Cochran. He formed a committee, arranged for hours and vaudeville artists to appear and made several hundred pounds for Mansfield, which Sam handed over to the former fighter, together with full accounts of money paid and money received.

Mansfield should have been sworn with lay. He wasn't. He refused to accept the accounts given and charged that Russell had not paid him all the money to which he was entitled. Mansfield took the matter to court. He lost. He pursued it to the High Court. But the hearing had

not gone far when he withdrew all the charges.

Mr. Francis Newbolt, in denouncing the action, said the case was "improper, ungrateful and unnecessary". Russell was cleared completely of any stain on his honor.

The courts have been called upon to give verdicts arising out of fight decisions and ethics issued by boxing commissions. Last year the New York Athletic Commission stripped Paul Pender of his world middleweight title and gave recognition to "Dick" Tiger as champion. Pender took the matter to court. He won his case. But he has not been able to force the New York Athletic Commission to restate him as champion. In fact, all world boxing commissions have refused to recognize Paul as champion since his stripping by the N.Y.A.C.

On January 21, 1921, American

bantamweight Paddy O'Gatty beat Ray Moore on a foul in three rounds. The next day the New York Athletic Deputy Commissioner Walter Hook withheld O'Gatty's purse, changed the decision of the bout to "no contest" and suspended O'Gatty, his manager and the referee for 90 days.

O'Gatty and his manager, Jimmy Twyford, instigated legal proceedings against the Commission for interfering with the referee's decision. O'Gatty and Twyford won the case and O'Gatty was paid.

On December 19, 1922, Joey Giardello received a split points decision over Billy Graham in a middleweight fight at Madison Square Garden. Commissioners Bob Christy and G. H. Powell changed the scorecard of one of the judges, thus giving the verdict to Graham. Giardello took the matter to court.

The court ruled in favor of Giardello and that is how the verdict reads in the record books — Giardello outpointed Graham.

Leaving the courts and returning to the ring, boxing was banned at various times in the past — but boxing did not prevent the sport taking place. On July 8, 1890, John L. Sullivan defended his world bare knuckle championship against Jake Kilrain at Killeberg, Missouri. Sullivan won by KO in the 15th round. It was the last world bare knuckle heavy weight championship.

Kilrain was arrested for taking part in a prize fight and sentenced to two months in jail. A peculiar rule of the day allowed prisoners to be turned out — at a price — to work for the buyer. Jake was "bought" by someone in New Orleans — a state where boxing was legal — and while still a prisoner, Kilrain fought and won a fight for which he collected 1500 dollars.

Bare knuckle fighting and boxing with gloves are as far apart as the poles. The style of fighting was different, the ring was different, the rules were different, the training was different. But one method of training I saw detailed in an old 1880 newspaper was unorthodox — even for the bare knuckle days. Here it is verbatim from that paper:

"The White Star of Texas is now in training to enter the prize ring. He will fight Gopher Ball in this city next Monday night for 5000 dollars, and after the fight intends to knock out Sullivan for 25,000 dollar stakes. At present The Star is undergoing the most remarkable course of training on record. This week he has been walked around Franklin Square with a dumb bell fastened to each leg. He has had lead-weight belts in a tub, and has had his legs beaten black and blue with fat-bird cane.

"Today he was hitched to a swill cart and trotted three miles. After that a beer barrel was tied



Jimmy Clabby, who was Cyclone Johnson Thompson's second in his match against Tim Laid, consistently harried abuse at referee "Sammy" Baker's handling of the fight.

to one leg and a dumb-bell to the other, and he waited a mile. Then he was again beaten with barbed wire, and sand-papered from head to foot. His diet is bananas. For drink he is given a mixture of brown stout, mustard, gin, vinegar, molasses, soda-water and pepper sauce. His name is Harry Sharp."

With that kind of training he would be a snag only to himself. Don't know how he got on with Copeley Bill but he never fought John L. Sullivan.

There was a time when big Pat Connelley was being touted as "the next heavyweight champion of the world." Max Baer put a stop to that when he skinned the big Irishman in the first round in 1940. Up to then Big Pat had won 25 of his 30 fights by knock-out.

Pat carried on after the Baer fight and by the end of 1951 he had had 84 fights in his career, winning 57 by KO. The bad cold punch.

It is his last fight in 1951 that I wish to chronicle. His opponent was Joe Rahut. In the first round Pat hit Joe so hard on the head that Rahut's pants split all the way down the back! The referee did not stop the fight and all those present saw a lot of Rahut until the bell ended the round. Only then was he allowed to don another pair of trousers. The bout lasted the scheduled 10 rounds, with Connelley the winner on points.

The great American negro, Sam Langford fought Australian Colin Bell one day in temperature of about 120 degrees. At the end of the 15th round the referee declared a draw. Langford responded to the official "Let us have a winner. Mr. Referee I'll race Mister Bell over 75 yards and whoever wins the race wins the fight."

Bell, a fine athlete, agreed. The two lined up, the referee dropped his can and away they ran. Near the end Langford was ahead but Bell threw himself at the tape and the race ended in a dead heat. So the fight really stayed a draw. Later the two met again, with Langford winning by knockout.

Some 25 years ago two heavyweights by name Delmon and Docie Steader, met in America. In the second round Delmon landed a hard right on Docie's head. The jaw Docie's head immediately dropped his hands, turned on his heel and walked to his corner. He reached for the stool and sat down. The referee followed him to see what was wrong. Docie's head just looked at the referee casually and said: "He's too good I quit."

During an exhibition bout in 1924, Jack Dempsey stopped off at Alabama. Jack bowled over a couple of locals and quickly ran out of sparring partners. The exhibition was given in a theatre, with fans paying to watch, so Jack Keenan, Dempsey's manager, urgently sought additional sparring partners.

A big negro volunteered. "Done any boxing?" queried Keenan.

"Yamah, I boxed Sam Lang-



Max "Smoozy" Baker refereed the December, 1948, match between Tim Laid and Johnny Thompson. He became so computered with Thompson's chief second that he landed a punch himself.

ford," replied the negro.

Quickly the negro was hustled into the ring. Gloves were tied on his hands and the bell sounded. Dempsey came out of his corner in his customary weave, fought with a right and hooked with his left. The punch caught the negro on the jaw, dropping him to the canvas.

The referee, noting the negro was OK, said to him, "Get up, Sambo."

"Nose," replied Sambo. "Aren't you gonna fight any more?" queried the referee.

"Yusir, Ah'm gonna fight some more—but not tonight." And he refused to get off the floor until Dempsey left the ring.

In February, 1925, a rough American lightweight named Johnny Rastler had his last fight in Australia. Johnny was beaten here by Billy Grimes and American Joe Hall, disputing the decision on each occasion. Then came his final Australian fight. The opposition was Australian Billy Richards. The venue was Sydney Stadium.

Referee Joe Wallis warned Rastler repeatedly for breaches of the rules. Rastler was very annoyed at

the rebuke and by the last round the American was fit to be tied. Came the final bell and Wallis roared his head on Richards' head, signifying the Australian as winner. Then, as was Big Joe's custom, he abruptly turned his back and walked to the ropes, preparatory to leaving the ring.

Rastler let out a roar, ran after Wallis and hit him twice. Wallis quickly turned and drove Rastler back across the ring with two heavy punches. Rastler quickly returned to action while police, seconds and spectators piled into the ring.

At least 20 men congregated at the scene of action on one side of the hampden square. Then came the sound of creaking timber—and the ring tipped on one side, dumping much of its human cargo into the aisle.

That unexpected event saved an ugly situation from developing into a full scale riot. The crowd saw the funny side and burst into a loud roar of laughter.

Needless to say, Rastler was put on the first available boat back to the States.

(Continued on page 57)

# SUNLIT MAID



*In a sunny glade  
By a rippling brook,  
Stands a young maiden  
With a warm sultry look.  
The sun on her tresses  
Gives a silvery thread—  
To the rich auburn brown  
That caresses her head...*



# MERCY



The O'Keefes were somewhat of a legend around Suva. And when Carmel O'Keefe

THIS Fijian houseboy, Eli, opened the door to John Saul. Almost before Saul could extend a greeting, Joan Sinclair came hurrying. "Darling, I'm so glad you're here!" Saul was conscious of the warmth and sincerity in her kiss.

"Hey! We only perked at lunch-time." He grinned at her.

"But darling, that's hours." She had a happy, infectious manner—a girl who would grow old gracefully and beautifully. John Saul was deeply in love with her.

"What's it going to be like if they send you to another flight?" he inquired.

She shook him thoughtfully. "Don't tease, darling—I'm frightfully jealous and possessive." In the plain white dress with its flared skirt and bare shoulders,

and dark hair fluffed out a little, she had put severity aside with her business uniform.

The front gate slammed loudly in the night. Quick footsteps echoed on the cement footpath, sprang up the steps to the veranda. A hard hand hammered on the front door.

"That's Tim O'Keefe," Joan said as Eli went to answer the summons.

"O'Keefe!" Saul looked down at her, frowning a little. "You didn't tell me . . . I thought this was to be an evening for your family and I to get acquainted."

She laughed. "Of course, darling. Now we are engaged they want to have a good look at you—to give their approval. But this is something serious that's come up. Didn't you hear the news—

about the Baylis? Carmel O'Keefe is Tim's wife."

"Good grief, I'm sorry," Saul apologized. "I didn't connect the two." He turned toward the door as O'Keefe burst in.

"Hi, Eli! Mr. Sinclair in?" O'Keefe queried. He was a man of medium height . . . brite, active . . . a sun-tanned, square-jawed face and grey, darting eyes. A man in his early 30s, he was dressed in tan slacks, a floral shirt and leather thongs on his feet.

"Hi, Tim," Joan greeted, "I want you to meet John Saul."

Saul was conscious of O'Keefe's grip. He was also conscious of the man. He'd heard a lot about O'Keefe. Only those not interested in aviation hadn't. O'Keefe flew a freighter—New Zealand, Australia, Canada—anywhere in the

# MISSION

FICTION • J. C. SHELLEY



was shipwrecked on Hallett's Reef, Tim O'Keefe knew just what to do . . .

Pacific where there was freight to be delivered or picked up. A lot of flying men spoke of O'Keefe with reverence. Saul was interested in a vague way. As a co-pilot flying the Pacific route to Vancouver he had some sort of status on the flying world too. And like so many more of his kind, he was inclined to look down his nose a bit at freighter pilots.

"Your dad is?" O'Keefe barged, looking at Jean and ignoring Saul after the formality of the handshake.

"Yes."

They followed her across the lounge room and out to the screened veranda. A floor lamp threw a pool of soft light on polished boards and colored Pijuan southern-woods. Ian Sinclair rose to greet them. He was a tall, heavily-boned

man with a quiet sensitive face. Saul fixed him instantly.

"Mother's taken the car to town," Jean continued, "but she won't be long. Please sit down."

Ell arrived with a tray of glasses and a can of chilled beer. Saul was vaguely worried about the apparent tension in the room but the interlude seemed to soften the atmosphere.

A cane chair protested as O'Keefe sat down. "Did you hear the news — the local stuff, I mean?" For all its quick abruptness, O'Keefe's voice was not harsh. Saul, realising that O'Keefe was a friend of the family, relaxed.

"Yes," Ian Sinclair said simply. He looked thoughtfully at the glass in his hand, obviously not

intending to say anything further for the moment.

"You mean about the Boyda?" Jean asked softly. She had sat down on a cane stool, glass held in both hands, looking down at the floor.

"Carmel was on it," O'Keefe continued quietly, revolving his glass round and round so that the light sparkled and glinted on it. "There was a note on the bed about it when I got home."

"Ruth said Carmel had charted the Boyda," Sinclair said. "There was the captain and two others for crew. She wanted to paint Hallett's Reef."

"That's right," O'Keefe agreed. "That's what she said in her note. And now the Boyda's a wreck — and there's no news of survivors." "Drink up and have another,"



"Yes, it is rather a narrow night to be wearing a night gown but she's all right, I don't have anything on under it."

Starbuck said hospitably, "There's plenty more in the refrigerator."

"I feel like going down to the pub and getting refilled!" O'Keefe said angrily.

"If you want to do that I'll go with you," Starbuck offered.

"Only what damn use would that do?" O'Keefe added, "It was obvious he was only talking."

Paul had heard the news about the Mayra, but the time had not given it his full attention. Now, suddenly, it was a closer thing. He drank from his glass slowly, thinking back over airport and pub gossip — anything he'd heard concerning Carmel O'Keefe.

There was nothing dirty in any of it. Carmel wasn't the type. She was perhaps eccentric and temperamental — being, a lot of people maintained. Paul did not believe that part. Carmel had a gift as a painter, and a damned good one from what he'd seen of her work.

He hardly knows her personally, having seen her once or twice at

a distance when someone had pointed her out — a stout little woman with blonde hair worn in a pony tail. She was wholly unimpaired — able to turn up at a cocktail party wearing skin-tight leopard-skin pants and a yellow blouse that left nothing to the imagination . . . or go to church in an evening gown.

But wherever she went there was never a dull moment. Carmel O'Keefe believed you were a fool if you didn't get all the fun you could out of life.

Like her husband she was somewhat of a legend around Suva. People always talked about the O'Keefes, because there was always something new happening to them. Rumor had it that when Tim arrived back at Nandi in his freighter, he'd hop in his Austin and head for Suva — but he'd never know, until he got home — whether he was welcome or not. Paul had heard they were positively attached to each other but fought like cat and dog.

O'Keefe swallowed his beer and

pushed his glass across the table to be refilled. "Thanks, I can do with another."

Paul got the impression the man was a contradiction. One minute he might be in the depths of depression — the next on the crest of the wave.

"You know," O'Keefe said abruptly, "we had a hell of a go in last time I was home." His face wore a smile for a instant. "It was breakfast time. I copped a plate of bacon and soft-boiled eggs on top of my skull. I was a bit of a mess. Luckily I'd just come from the shower and wasn't wearing a stitch of clothing."

Joan stifled a giggle. She had apparently heard of the episode through her mother. "How long were you home for, Tim?"

"Three days. Maybe I overstayed my welcome. But then other blokes hang round their home year in year out. Strange, isn't it?" He seemed genuinely perplexed.

"What did you say to Carmel to make her not like that?" Joan persisted.

"What did I say? Just the only sort of thing any man's likely to say to his wife first thing in the morning. I'd hopped out of the shower and was deciding about looking for some clean clothes. 'Put your clothes on—you're a big boy now!' she said. I chuckled her under the chin and said, 'Hell, Carm, old girl, you're starting to show your age. Why don't you wear your corsets more often?'"

Joan got an attack of the giggles. Paul grimaced, beginning to understand some of the rumors he'd heard. They were certainly a mad pair, the O'Keefes.

"All jokes aside—this is serious now," Starbuck broke in. "When I heard the news I rang Moskov— he's in the Government shipping department. It seems that a Navy patrol plane spotted the wreck just on dusk. They were able to get down low enough to read the name Mayra. She's beached on the northern up of the reef — lying holed and half-submerged on her side. The plane crew saw no survivors."

"Talbot's Reef is 120 miles to the northeast," O'Keefe said. "It's three miles long — a series of lagoons and small islets. One still, near the centre, is about an acre in area with a few palms growing on it. What the hell did Carmel want to go there for? There's plenty of palms around here she can point."

He looked at them belligerently. "Did you know Carmel was going on this trip, Tim?" he shot at Starbuck.

Starbuck looked uncomfortable, plainly regretting the fact that his wife was not there for moral support. He sought to evade the question by calling for another can of beer.

"Did you know?" O'Keefe persisted.

"Tath dh say something about it at the time. But I don't think I took much notice. You know what Carmel's like. She's always full of crazy ideas."



"And how?" O'Keefe said sourly. "The note at home said she was going for four or five weeks—and that there were eggs and bacon in the 'fridge. I'm not certain what she meant by the latter."

"Serious as the news is, there could be survivors," Sinclair said quietly. "The Government's sending a boat in the morning. If you like I'll try to get you a passage on it."

"Too damn slow, lan," O'Keefe protested. The chair creaked at his impatient movements. "They won't get there until tomorrow night. There'll be no news until the next day. Damn it! I'll be in Tonga by then."

Sinclair shrugged his shoulders. "It's about the best that can be done. I know how you feel about it, old chap—but what else can we do?"

"I'll hop out and have a look myself in the morning," O'Keefe said quickly.

"What?" Sinclair, startled, stared at his friend.

"I'll go in the *Auster*," O'Keefe said, withdrawing into himself. "Three hundred miles there and back. That gives me 20 minutes for a look around and 15 minutes of reserve fuel when I get back. Plenty. I'll get away at dawn. No back by eight — that'll give me time for a shave, a hair to cut and get up to Nandi for a noon take-off in the freighter."

"You're mad, Tim!" Sinclair exclaimed. "That's about 300 miles over the sea in a single-engine plane. What about headwinds — things like that?"

"Won't be anything above a 30-knot breeze in the morning," O'Keefe stated.

Silence settled on the room. No



"And avoid excitement of any kind . . . AVOID EXCITEMENT OF ANY KIND . . . AVOID EXCITEMENT . . ."

one questioned O'Keefe on his weather forecasts. Over the years he had become an expert on Pacific weather.

Saul, watching O'Keefe, felt a vast respect for the man. He had flown the freighter up from Auckland that day and was due out of

Nandi at noon the next . . . but at dawn he was proposing a 500-mile jaunt to Hackett's Reef in an *Auster*. Saul ~~was~~ had been justified in thinking the man mad. But O'Keefe wasn't mad. He was going out on a mercy mission — no man could do less. Saul thought of ~~ascending~~ . . . but there didn't seem to be anything he could do.

"But the authorities won't let you do," Sinclair said hurriedly, trying desperately to deter O'Keefe. He was appalled at the thought of all those miles across the sea in a single-engine plane.

"They won't know I'm gone until I get back," O'Keefe grunted. He looked happier now — contented in mind and body. He had made his decision . . . that was all there was to it. "I wonder who I can get to go with me?" He looked at Saul.

Saul realized they were all looking at him, and he grunted foolishly. He was due out of Nandi himself the following evening. He knew how it would be with the skipper if the co-pilot was sleepy on the long haul to Vancouver. Also, he had no desire to go with O'Keefe in the morning — not under such impossible conditions. The man was asking for trouble.

Saul's trained, calculating mind reviewed the proposed flight objectively. He reacted inwardly at the thought of it. In the first place there would be no permission given.



"Look Saul, when I want your opinion I'll ask for it . . . Now then, what's your opinion?"

(Continued on page 47)

It was a gasser, but nothing to laugh at . . .

# CAP THE KILLER—



# OR DIE!

An oilfield man's life is tough and tiring. And when a gasser blows, someone's got to cap it . . .

I WALKED into the bunkhouse, stiff and sore after a day of unloading and stacking pipe, thinking it would be best to take it easy on the bunk while after I cleaned up.

I had a month in the oil fields behind me and my muscles had had time to tighten up. Tired as I was, I felt good, and I enjoyed knowing the day's work was over, and that I'd done my share.

I thought I might take off late town that evening and spend a little of that first month's pay, before it burned a hole in my pocket.

I dropped my gloves and jacket on the iron frame of my cot and started toward the washroom.

"Get your stuff off my bunk, buddy," Charley Ryan's voice sounded behind me.

"What do you mean, your bunk?"

I turned around in time to see Ryan's big paws knock my jacket and gloves off the bunk onto the floor. I realized he had moved all my stuff and equipment from the space it had occupied to the place he had used, and he had moved his own stuff in to take its place. Ryan followed my glance and laughed.

"I moved your stuff. I decided I want to sleep here."

"I've been here a month. You can't just move me out of my bunk."

"Who says I can't? I'm an old hand here, sonny. You just been here a month. You got be rights here. This bunk's too nice for somebody as green as you are."

Ryan weighed 30 or so pounds more than I did and stood several inches taller. He had given me a hard time from my first day in the bunkhouse.

"Get your big tail off my bunk, Ryan."

"What are you going to do about it?"

Ryan started to laugh. I swung and caught him off balance and he went down. As he was getting up, I swung again and he went down again. Ryan began to sweat.

"Why you little son of a bitch!" he yelled. "I'm going to kill you, so help me."

I was so good I couldn't see straight. But I knew where Ryan was. I dived across the floor and landed on his shoulders and began to beat him big head against the iron frame of one of the bunks. Ryan tried to shake me off and I let him know it as hard as I could. His head snapped against the bunk frame again and he went out like a light.

Jim Kilpatrick, the foreman, came into the bunkhouse then.

"What the hell do you think you're up to?" he roared.

"Nothing. It's a personal matter," I said. The blood was pounding in my ears so I could hardly hear him.

"Well this is no time for personal matters," Kilpatrick roared again, even louder this time. "I don't know how you got him cold, but wake him up again. We're all going back on duty. A wild one blew in on number 17. We've got to cap it tonight or the whole damn field could go up."

"You mean we're going to cap a gasser?"

Kilpatrick looked at me as though I was some kind of animal he'd never seen before and didn't like the look at.

"Well, you'll learn. There's nobody else around to do it. I'll get the rest of the crew and meet you over by the cap — you and Ryan, when you wake him up."

The town was Berger, Texas, and I came into it in the late spring of 1928 looking for a short-term job as an oil roustabout.

Berger was a boom town, as new as the oil field itself.

But already it was a lot bigger than towns like Comstock, with a hundred years of tradition and older ways behind them. Maybe half the town's population was made up of men who actually worked in the field—the rest of Berger consisted of the thousand-and-one varieties of seamen, quick-money artist, gambler, easy-money woman, each of whom could take a month's or a half-month's salary from a husky, not-too-bright oil worker in less time than it took to shake his hand.

There wasn't an awful lot of law in Berger. The Texas Rangers took care of major offenders—murderers, big-pockets, and the like. They didn't have any real jail in town, and you could walk through the streets and see the prisoners out in the open on what they called "the trotline," stacked out on a long heavy iron chain with shorter lengths and heavy metal anklets spanned at intervals on it.

If a man got killed in a fair fight, the law didn't pay too much attention to it, unless you could prove that the fight was really a setup from the start. Texas law hasn't changed too much in that respect to this day.

I probably didn't look too good to the field superintendent when I presented myself and told him the front office had signed me on.

I was still in my teens, skinny at 140 pounds, and I spent my winters going to school out of the State. My nearby pressed clothes

had never had a spot on them, the white canvas gloves that stuck out of my hip pocket were brand new and obviously had never been used. When I stuck out my hand to shake his, there wasn't a callous to be seen. I was green as grass and, thinking back on it now, I guess I must have had something like nervousness written all over my face.

The foreman for the roustabout crew was Jim Kilpatrick. His face told when he took a look at me the next morning, but he never said a word about it.

Kilpatrick was a first-rate field foreman. Whenever a job came up he picked it right along with us. If I didn't know which end was up on a job, Jim wouldn't knock me if I started out on it wrong.

Jim picked up the work, whatever it was, and got started on it without benefit of my help. All the time he'd be talking about what he'd done the night before, or what was happening somewhere else on the field — anything except the job he was showing me how to do.

After a couple of weeks of this, I would have picked up the idea of the job without any difficulties, and could have it over from him without either one of us having said, or even acknowledged, the embarrassing fact that, up until that moment, I hadn't known the first thing about what I was doing.

I learned to admire Jim Kilpatrick, and after I'd been on the job long enough to know the ropes, I recognized that his crew was the only one on the field that consistently got its work done on time.

It was the kind of work that made you into shape quickly. Chopping up around active or inactive wells, laying and connecting the pipe, digging ditches for the oil gas, or water lines, propping or caving the pipe, unloading it or stacking it — I got to feel at home around the field, and I got to like my job pretty well, maybe because it was so different from the kind of thing I had done over the last couple of years.

I guess when Charley Ryan saw me the first time he decided he was looking at something he didn't like.

Maybe it was just the difference that showed that I was just going to be in Berger's oil fields for that summer, and Charley had already been there a couple of years, and likely as not wasn't going anywhere else.

The first time I tried to talk to him he put it to me levelly.



"But you can't wait to get me in the hotel room and see how I look without my glasses."

"Kid, you keep out of my way and I'll keep out of yours. I don't like you and I don't mind telling you to your face. The sooner you get out of here, the happier I'll be."

The trouble was, Ryan wasn't as good as his word. He was a loser, and he got into a kind of mood sometimes when nothing went right for him. When that happened, he liked to ride me, and after a couple of weeks of getting pushed out of the way in the chow line, or taking winecrates that I didn't like the idea of taking, I got pretty short-tempered myself.

But Charley Ryan had his own kind of brains, and he worked well on the roastsboat crew, and the other men looked up to him in some ways.

It was the first time I ever got into a set-up where I felt like an eighth ball, and I didn't know just what to do about it. I had always got along pretty well whenever I went before. Now I was fed up and on edge, and when I came in that afternoon and Charley Ryan tried to pull that stunt with my equipment and my bunk, I exploded.

I didn't cherish any illusions about being able to handle myself in any kind of mixup with Ryan, who was not only larger than I, but tough and experienced. I just got to the point where I couldn't take any more without putting my back up.

But all that seemed years and miles behind me as Ryan and myself and half a dozen other men rode in the old fire touring car Jim Kilpatrick used as transportation, racing toward the gasser that had blown in so violently and suddenly that the whistling roar of the rushing gas could be heard for

miles.

That gasser had to be capped, and we were the men who were going to do it. You'd think it would be a job for experts, but they didn't have so many experts in those days — just as they didn't have any of the safety equipment they use today for the same job.

Actually no well is "safe", but a new well is especially dangerous, until you get a head on it which will control and contain the gases that otherwise fan out through the whole surrounding area, where any chance spark can touch it off.

When a well blows in, as this one had, you start out with a fully dangerous situation already created. You then have to put the head on the rig with the chance that if any slightest thing goes wrong, you're finished.

As we came into the immediate area of the gasser, the strong, rotten-smell sulphurous smell piled into our noses like pea-soup. If it didn't choke you to death, it would probably wind up drowning you. You get used to that bad smell if you work around the oil fields, but this was the strongest and most choking contamination I had ever hit. None of the others on the roastsboat crew liked it either.

"This is the most awful thing I ever smelled. Let's get it over with," Yedden said. He was new in the fields that summer like myself.

Ryan just grinned. "If the snail's the worst we got out of this, it'll be enough for me."

Actually the closer we got to the blown-in well, the less trouble the snail gave us. There was a stiff breeze helping, but most of all it was the force of the wild jet of gas itself — it blew itself so far out that the couple of yards close up to the rig was comparatively contamination free.

"OK. Let's go in and take a look at it," Kilpatrick said.

"Nothing much to look at," Ryan commented scarily. "It's what you don't see that'll kill ya."

I was feeling just scared enough to get sore.

"Look, Ryan, shut up," I snapped at him.

"What's the matter? Ain't you ever done this before?" Ryan said. "You getting scared?"



"Quick, make a circle!"



He went through the fear-stiffened motions, his fright obvious. Once he had been the country's greatest matador . . . now he was a has-been, scared to death by a four-legged animal.

# RETURN TO GLORY

FICTION • DAMON MILLS

THE Wolf lay on the bed, staring aimlessly at the curtains rattling gently in the mid-morning breeze.

He heard her footsteps coming up the stairs and stopping at the door but he did not get up. He heard her fumbling at the door while she put down the key to turn the handle. She opened the door and came in.

She put the key alongside him and sat on the edge of the bed. He reached for the food, lowering her.

She reached out with a hand roughened a little with work and stroked his naked chest. "You didn't come to me last night."

He stuffed the tortillas into his mouth and grunted. "Too tired. A man gets tired, you know."

She stroked his chest more eagerly. "Tired? What do you do to get tired?"

He reached for the coffee and swilled it down. He stared at her, his eyes cold and distant as a cobra's.

"Maybe I'm just getting tired of the company."

Her hands became two frantic claws pulling him toward her. "Don't say that—don't say that. You wouldn't leave me even, would you, Lucho?" Her eyes were suddenly two great black pools of apprehension.

He pushed her hands away. "Don't let's talk of everything. A man gets tired and he moves on. That's all." He reached for more tortillas.

She got up and moved away from the bed. He watched the movement of her hips as she walked across the room. No doubt about it, she had meat on her and it was pretty well distributed. But a man got tired, that was all.

She turned quickly back to him, her long black hair swinging about her shoulders, the wrinkles suddenly a little more obvious about her eyes. He thought, she's getting older. He could see she knew what he was thinking.

She burst out, "Lucho, I've been thinking of selling this place and buying a vaca. A small one. We could raise cattle. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

He finished the coffee and lay back. "Raise more cows? How exciting."

She came back towards him, her hands reaching out, hungry for

him, but stopping suddenly because she could see he did not want it.

"Lucho, my darling, don't you want that? Wouldn't you like—"

He snarled at her. "What are you talking about, woman? Breed bulls, yes. They're noble, first, brave. Lions with hooves. But cows—"

He turned away from her angrily. After a moment he heard her gathering up the things. He heard her go to the door and he knew without looking that her cheeks were streaked with tears, but he did not turn his head. The door opened and she left.

After a while the door opened again. He turned his head sideways. It was the boy, tiny and haggard.

He snarped. "What do you want?"

The boy came closer, the big eyes worshipping him. "Tell me again how it was when you fought in Seville and Mexico City, all Lolo."

The boy had her eyes, black and lustreous. He sat up and ruffed the boy's hair, he said. "Well, it was like this, muchacho . . ."

He began to talk, his eyes glowing as he began to re-create the days of glory . . .

Down below she moved across the room to pick up the bowl emptied by the priest. The priest stared at her. "Daughter, have you rid yourself of that evil man yet?"

She shook her head. The priest persisted. "Not that such an alliance would be of any value, but has he offered to marry you?"

Again she shook her head. The priest, impaler and stern, got up. "Daughter, rid yourself of this man. He will bring great evil upon you and the boy."

She kept her head down. She

moved back across the room, the bowl and the empty saucers in her hand.

A short fat man at one of the tables reached out and took her arm, his pudgy fingers lingering on her firm flesh.

"Marie—now—one second—"

She got down, her head drooping. He stared at her eagerly. "Marie, have you and he—as he leaving?"

She raised her head, staring right through him. She said simply, "I told him I'd buy a ranch. Just a small one. He could raise cattle. But he said no—he said—"

She stopped, her mouth quivering.

The little fat man, face reddening, blurted, "That—that man—that animal—bring off a woman—"

She shot him a fierce look. "Don't say that, Don Felipe. He was a great fighter."

The fat man snarled, "That's right—was. You know, for a moment I had thought of getting him to appear at my corrida. But how foolish to think that he—"

The woman stared. "Your corrida?"

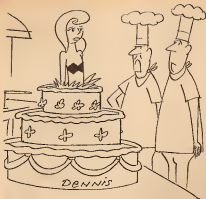
The little fat man nodded self-importantly. "Yes. The mayor of a town should put on these shows now and again. I intend to let people see I am not the pants-punching type the last fellow was. I intend—"

She said sharply, "Don't ask him. If he goes back there again I'll lose him forever. Can't you see that?"

He stared back at her and suddenly shrugged his fat little shoulders helplessly. He said softly, "You really love that man, don't you?"

She turned her head away and got up. He said almost timidly, "Marie, my dear, I could educate the boy, give him everything he needs. And I would treat you





"She needs more yeast."

like an infant. You have only to say the word."

She leaned down and impulsively pressed his arm. "You're a good man, but—"

He grinned wryly. "One word. And I can wait a long time."

She went through into the kitchen. The little fat man rose from the table, sighed, and walked away.

The Wolf leaped at the table, the empty glasses sticking up to poke him. When he was drinking like this he looked like a wealth that had left a body and was engaged upon an aimless search for something he did not quite comprehend. He cupped the saucer of brandy and sipped it on top of the others. He thought wryly, it's nice to have a woman to supply your liquor—to supply everything for you.

The girl came in the door. The man drinking there, gaunt peasants and a couple of leather-faced rancheros, looked across at her and gaped.

She was swathed in furs, her slim legs sleek and lithe, her dark red hair curved about her head like a glittering bronze helmet. She walked across the room to The Wolf, her every movement showing she was a dancer.

A man came in behind her, lean, tight-lipped, hard-eyed, the gold chain at his waist matching the one slipped about his tie. The hard-eyed man looked down at The Wolf and flicked his eyes sidelong for a moment. He said abruptly, "It was her idea — this coming here to see you."

The Wolf looked up at her. "Ah—the goddess of loyalty, the sweeter of souls of undying faithfulness."

She said, "That wasn't called for, *Lobito*."

The Wolf grinned coldly. "And your running off to Mexico City with this maroon while I lay there ripped to pieces from the horns of that black monster in Seville—that was called for, my angel of fidelity?"

The hard-eyed man said sharply, "I don't like that word you called me."

"Mama, you should have been around to hear some of the things I called you back in Seville."

The girl said quickly, "I had an engagement in Mexico City. A big one. I would have lost a lot of money if I hadn't gone. And when I got back you'd left the hospital and nobody knew where you'd gone."

The hard-eyed man snarled, "You ran away. You never even went down to the empty place and tried moving around with a cape and a pal acting the bull for you."

The Wolf narrowed his eyes and the other man involuntarily moved back. "Stay there, messenger. I'm not going to hit you. Manager's aren't worth it. We liked, they take the money. And go to Mexico City with a lean like this."

The girl flushed. "You're teasing some nice names around."

The Wolf said softly, "You're lucky I'm not teasing you around."

The hard-eyed man said impatiently, "I told you how it would be. Let's get out of here."

The girl said urgently, "*Lobito*, you could get back up there again. You're still young. I want to help you do that."



"Don't lie to me, that's not our point . . . that's hypocrisy!"



The Wolf grinned harder. "I'm doing all right. A woman keeps me here. Gives me all I want. You want me to come back with you, put in the shops again, and reverse all that."

The girl stopped back. "We're staying overnight. We'll see you again tomorrow."

"Not if you come before noon. I don't get up till then. She brings my meals up to me." He sneered at the girl. "I learned all your tricks. Only I practice them on women."

The girl turned and went out the door, the hard-eyed man following her and peering about staying the night in this town. The eyes of the men in the room followed the girl.

The Wolf stared after her, face twisted cruelly, but deep in his eyes there was a flicker of rising passion. She had always been fire in his blood. He called loudly for another brandy . . .

She said bluntly, "Yes, senor, that is what I said — make Mi Lobo your first sword—your number one fighter."

The little fat man stammered, "But, senorita, he is no longer The Wolf. He is just a broken-down toadstool living off a woman."

The girl snapped, "What you think you are? What do you figure this is — the Plaza Monumental del Madrid? He's the greatest name any of these goggle-eyed peasants will ever see in their lives."

"Yes, yes, but — but, senorita, they all know him for a drunken huckster. They will not believe that he could recapture the glory of the past."

She moved across the room, a shepheress of grace and blood-crackling silence. She sat on the desk, the tight frock riding up above her silken knees. He stared, eyes popping, sweating.

She leaned across and ran her fingers up the back of his neck, her face close against his. He shivered at the close-up cleavage. She groaned. "Now, senor, it's settled, isn't it? He will be your senior manager for this show of yours? And, who knows — you and I perhaps later."

He stared up at her, eyes bulging, overwhelmed. He nodded silently. She slid off the desk and poked up her hair. At the door she turned and blew him a kiss. As she went out she wiggled her hips. The little fat man gasped and giggled.

The Wolf got up and went to the door. She was standing there, her magnificent brown body sheathed in a skin-tight white frock with a neckline that left no doubt she was a woman.

He stared at her, his eyes narrowing. "What do you—"

"I've stayed over for another day. Peco left early this morning. I thought you might like to come for a drive. I've hired a car."

He stared silently. She put a slim brown hand on his arm.



"Oh, thank you . . . my car will be detailed . . . he watches you wrestle all the time."

"Please. I've got sandwiches and wine."

He said shortly, "Well — I'll get dressed." As he pulled his clothes on he realized with a quick flare of anger that he was getting as excited about it as a school-boy. He pushed the feeling down and went out to her. He walked slowly down the stairs with her and out to the car.

Behind them the other women watched, her eyes like open wounds . . .

They had left the orange groves behind and were slowly picking their way over the rut-purged white road. The girl drove with ease and skill.

The Wolf suddenly snapped his head to one side. Over to the right the fields spread out, a great sprawling panorama of palms and acacias with the glittering water of sparkling pools flashing in between. Moving across open spaces between the trees and water could be seen the huge black hump-backed dots.

He said fiercely, "Why did you

bring me past the cartijor?"

She kept her eyes on the rutted road. "Just for you to look at them again. They were great opponents, Luisito. But you were greater than they. And you could be again."

He kept looking, alert. Suddenly he said, "Stop the car."

She pulled up. Without a word he got out and sid walked across to the rolling mariana, the wooded land. He stepped up on to a small rise and watched. A huge black monster moved slowly from amongst a group of acacias, his hide like a great ebony mirror in the sunlight. The Wolf watched silently.

The girl was at his shoulder. She said softly, "The bulls of the little fat mayor will not be like that. You will kill them, those scoreovers, in a flash, like lightning striking. And you will find that you will again be a great torero valiente."

He said suddenly, "We'll eat here." With a little smile she



"What gets me . . . his explanations are so damned logical!"

turned back towards the car to get the sandwiches and wine . . .

They lay back, the grass whispering above them. She turned her head to him, running the tips of her fingers gently down his cheek. She whispered, "Lauda—"

He turned towards her, his eyes suddenly flaring. Her face broke into a happy smile and her fingers moved quickly to the buttonings of her dress . . .

Later in the car she curled up beside him as he got behind the wheel. She beamed across suddenly and kissed him tenderly behind the ear. She whispered, "It's only ever been you. Those others — they want money, success, rings up the ladder, money in the bank, fame on my shoulder, but it's only ever been you."

He looked back at her silently. He beamed toward her and kissed her. She broke away, panting, desire flaring up again in her eyes.

"Lauda, let's—"

He shook his head. "No more. If I'm going to fight I'll have to get in shape. Even for the scare-crowds of the little mayor. And I start right now."

She curled up against him again as he started up the motor. She purred at his ear, whispering, "You're cruel, my darling. But we'll make up for it later. How we'll make up for it . . ."

The woman and empty, "So you're going back with her."

The "Well" and "sharp," "I haven't taught Don Felipe's buff yet. If I'm a dog, that's it. No more trees at Comstock. No more bawling around at the 'country' wars, fighting to get back."

The woman shook her head. "You will destroy those scare-crowds of Don Felipe's like lightning striking."

He shot a quick glance at her. "That's what she said. It's good

to know people have faith in me."

She got up and moved across the room, half-turned from him. She said, "your woman will always have faith in you. She has faith that you will again become a great torero valiente. I had faith that you could become a good breeder of cattle. But we

can't both be right. And it seems that I will be the wrong one."

She turned her back completely upon him. She said softly, "I loved you like I never loved my husband. He was a good man, a fine father to the boy, until the accident came and he died. But you . . . you made me know what love is. It's sweet as paradise — and bitter as hell. You made me want to both kiss and kill you. But without you I'll wither up and there'll be nothing left. The boy, too, will weep."

She turned to face him, her eyes too stricken for tears. "But it's in the stars. She is a goddess and you will soon again be a god. Mars and Venus. You will go a long, long way together. Que haya suerte — let there be luck, maldad."

After she had gone he went over to the window and looked out. Soon he would be striding down those screwy ramps of the little mayor.

The face of the woman flashed across his mind with the pain in her eyes. He thought savagely, it would only be just if one of those bikes got the horn into me good. But then he shuddered a little and moved back from the window. He lay down on the bed until it was time to start dressing . . .

He looked around at the shambles. There were no placards. No horsemen to kick down



"Now, stop worrying about my damned handshake, George. Good night, dear, and sleep well."

and sink the long lance in and weaken the bull with the loss of blood.

There was no barrier, no bar-matade to slip behind when the bull was really raging and escape was momentarily necessary.

Nothing. Just the huge expanse of red-hot sand and a man-seeker seeking to kill you. Only he felt thankful it wouldn't be a sealer.

As senior matador he would take the first bull. He turned his back on the opening of the tent, like he used to do a long time ago when, an invincible destroyer of bulls, he had decidedly looked away from the monsters as they had poured forth.

The crowd was strangely silent. He turned slowly to look and something froze inside him.

It was a colossus — a braggado, a red-banded giant with a white belly. It thundered across the sand, a great redoubted sight more with horns like raking lances.

The mayor had dug up this demon from heaven knows where to make his show look good. And so make The Wolf look bad. As in death.

The Wolf thought, that little fat man really wants Maria. And then, sweating, he was thinking — how am I going to bring this animal down without a good pet?

He nodded jerkily at one of the gypsies, a bony young gypsy, to run the monster. The boy hesitated and then sidled out.

The Wolf watched closely and the sick feeling became a sudden violent retraction of the stomach. The beast slaked at the boy with one horn and then quick as lightning with the other.

The gypsy came scrambling back, white-faced. "I don't go out again, matador. That cathedral has fought more often than you."

The Wolf, swallowing hard, took the wetted cape and went out.

He knew from the start it was all wrong. His feet were as if he was moving in quicksand and he was a yard away from the charging demon. He did a couple of verónicas that he knew were sloppy and graceless, and once when he misjudged and the bull scraped past he jumped back as if he had been scalded. When his miserable few passes were over he was sweating and shaking as he walked away. The bull stood glowering, fresh and strong and deadly.

The second handler was a withered old drunk the mayor had also dug up from somewhere. He came at The Wolf and spat, "You've got a handful here, matador. But don't shake so much. They can smell fear."

The Wolf swilled the water around his mouth. "What in hell do I know about it?"

The old fellow shrugged. "I were proud for Belmonte."

The Wolf, still shaking, shot a quick look at him. "Forgive me,



"Hey ah, 'Money isn't everything' is here."

mans. I'm edgy."

The old man said drily, "You're more than edgy, matador. And that's a demon you've got hold of. But take it easy. Four verónicas would."

The Wolf relaxed a little. He was glad the old guy was there. The little fat mayor hadn't planned that but so well.

The other matador, a kid in a faded and bloodstained suit he'd bought cheap off some fallen star, went out to do the imitation quite as pretence of taking the bull away from a non-existent gored horse.

It happened like crimson lightning. The kid took the bull past but the demon suddenly spun and hooked, whee in the ways of the cape. The boy was lifted on the horns. The bull kept slapping, snorting, eyes rolling, blood dripping from his nose.

The Wolf, shaking, went out, flapping the cape. He knew the boy was dead before he hit the sand. He made a couple of passes

on four-stricken legs and then scrambled back to the fence. He watched them carrying the dead boy off, trampling.

The sword handler was going to say something but took a look at him and stopped. This was something only the matador himself could straighten out. Only it looked like the bull was going to do it for him.

He had placed the banderillas, God alone knew how, and now he was going out for the last act, the heart-shaped mueta in one hand.

He had seen her up there, her hair a coiled flame about her head, her sleek body a thing of desire even from that distance — but he did not look up. The fear and the dread of what was to come was too great.

He went through the fear-stiffened motions, his flight obvious. If tragedy had not already struck even that country audience would have been hooting him.

(Continued on page 32)

# TWO BIT HERO

"Guns and shells cost money," was Cherokee's plaint . . . till he learned that the lack of them might cost his own life.

THE sheriff said, "Won't cost you a dime, Cherokee, an' it'll save be a big help to me."

"One of the possums grained 'Wear his wagon seat down some,' he said."

Cherokee Darham was used to this. He put the point of his bony shoulder against a wagon bow and looked out to look at the girl. She was a spare thing, he thought, with a peaked, swelled face and a cloudy look in her blue eyes, standing there beside the big sheriff, almost covering.

Cherokee Darham, the medicine man, wasn't stingy. It was just that he knew the value of dollars, having been without them the greater part of his life. His dark eyes lifted from the girl to the sheriff. "How 'bout the bridge toll?" he asked in a flat, characterized voice. "It's two bits a head for passengers, besides a dollar for any tin."

The sheriff laughed and tossed a silver dollar to the grout man who sat on the seat of the covered wagon. A badly-painted sign on the weathered canvas said Cherokee's "Care-All." In smaller letters underneath the same uncertain hand notified the world that Cherokee's "Care-All" was good for coughs, colds, aches and pains of all kinds and every affliction on earth.

Cherokee caught the dollar and slowly took out a long leather purse and unslung the top and deliberately dropped the coin on the capacious depths. He rolled the purse and carefully returned it to his inside coat pocket. He said, gruffly, "Get up here, woman. Ain't got no time to waste."

The sheriff helped the woman up over the front wheel. She sat on the seat as far away from Cherokee as she could get, huddling forlornly in the corner. Cherokee hardly glanced at her as he lifted his horse.

The sheriff put his hand on Cherokee's knee. "Leave her off with my old woman," he said, low-voiced. "We'll have her main some daylight."

Cherokee looked at the girl. She gave no indication she'd heard the sheriff. He grunted and flicked his lines and started to his team. They moved out of the shade of the buildings into the blinding yellow heat of a morning sun.

The wagon road ran straight across the scrubbrush flats and disappeared into the purple of the foothills. It took Cherokee a half a day to make it to Starve-acre Ford and during that time the girl hadn't spoken a single word. Cherokee didn't mind. He wasn't a talkative man either, except when he put up his medicine for sale.

Cherokee pulled the team off the road and into the dusty willows that lined the creek. He took out the horses and led them down to water and afterward poured a small measure of grain into each bag.

"You kin go to the creek and fresh up what I make some coffee," he told the woman. He helped her down over the wheel, feeling the bony hardness of her hands and feeling disturbed about it. He watched her pick her way around through the willows and down to the creek, trying to rid himself of the prying feeling that grew on him.

He built a small fire and when she returned he had the cold lunch he'd fixed that morning ready, together with the coffee.

"Ain't much," he said, "but will do."

She said, low-voiced, "I'm not hungry."

His head stopped with the tin cup halfway to his lips. He felt the bite of irritation in him. "Gotta keep up your strength," he said grumpily. He blew noisily into the coffee cup and then sipped his coffee.

"Why?" she cried suddenly. "Why should I?"

He looked into the tin cup, slightly rusty around the handle. "Bring it on yourself," he said lazily.

"That's what they all say," she said, her blue eyes dry and bright. "But it's not true. I haven't seen Jed for four years until yesterday."

"You got a bill of divorcement?" Cherokee wanted to know.

She shook her head a hopelessness setting on her. "I never had the money. I left him when we was married three months. I know what he was. I came to Colabate and got a job with Morse."

"The freighter," Cherokee asked.

She nodded. "I did right well, too. He promoted me from book-

keeper to cashier. Then yesterday Jed and these two other men walked in. They lo-looked Mr. Morse and took all the money. The two men with Jed were killed. One of them didn't die right away and he identified Jed."

"Would you try to run away?" Cherokee's coffee was cold. He drank it anyway, being a man who didn't waste anything.

"What would you have done?" she asked. "It looked bad for me. I was scared sick. I didn't know what to do. So I ran away. You don't believe me, do you?"

"For certain," Cherokee said. "I believe you." He did too. There was something about the woman that conveyed honesty and character.

"But the others," she said. "They won't."

"Enter try'n eat," Cherokee advised.

"I can't," she said. Her eyes were no longer dry and bright. She put her face in her hands.

Cherokee carefully wrapped the remaining food and stowed it carefully in his wagon. He put the team in again. He helped the woman up to the seat. He said, "Get that blanket out'n the back. Make the seat a little softer." He had his foot on the hub when the rider came out of the willows.

The man's face, darkened by sun and wind, was unshaven and his eyes red-rimmed. His horse was spent. The woman cried out, "Jed!"

Cherokee dropped his feet from the hub and turned slowly because Jed Winthrop held a gun in his gruffy hand. "Won't do you no good to run or try'n do anything," Cherokee said.

Winthrop kept his eyes on Cherokee after one quick look at the woman standing there, with the blanket in her arms. Winthrop bared his yellow teeth in a snarl. "Mebbe so, mebbe not. Where's your gun?" He slipped to the ground with a sinuous motion that reminded Cherokee of a snake slithering over the rocks.

"Don't worry me," Cherokee said. "Guns cost money an' so do shells."

Winthrop walked to Cherokee and slipped his hand against Cherokee's ribs on both sides. He scratched himself the medicine man had no gun and then he swung up on the wagon and crawled over



the seat and disappeared beneath the cover. He was out in a moment, grinning, holding a bottle of Cherokee's Cure-All. He knocked the neck off one of the wagon run and took a long drink of the dark liquid. "Not bad," he said. He took another drink and tossed the half-empty bottle into the creek.

"That'll be four bits," Cherokee said.

Winthrop looked at him, balancing the gun in his hand. "Charge it," he said. He put a foot on the wagon wheel and dropped to the ground. "Stay right where you are," he warned. He unsaddled his windbroken horse and threw the saddle over the tail gate of Cherokee's wagon. He slipped the bridle and tossed that after his saddle. He took the horse by the backmare and disappeared among the willows. A shot broke the stillness and in a moment he was back.

The outlaw motioned with his gun. "Get up in that wagon," he said.

Cherokee stopped to the wagon and stood there, feeling the wagon shake and hearing it creak as the killer climbed over the tailgate and pulled the canvas down. In a moment the killer's gun bared into Cherokee's back.

"Ain't aimin' to hurt nobody," Winthrop growled, less I hafta. You just go long like you was before. You got me across that river and I'll be hard to ketch."

Cherokee sat down and tilted his head. He spoke to the horses and the wagon moved across the creek.

The finger of rutted, rocky road turned south on the neighborhood bench. Late that afternoon the wagon jolted and groaned over a dry rocky wash and then swung wide to plunge downward to the river, with the slender thread of wood spanning the gorge. The canvas behind Cherokee swished across and the gun probed him through the fold of rough cloth.

"Don't make no mistakes," Winthrop's hard voice said from behind Cherokee.

"You can't get away with it, Jed."

There was a note of hysteria in the woman's voice.

"Shut up, Noreen," the voice said in the same hard note.

They came up to the river and My Eppery, keeper of the toll bridge, moved out, waving his hand to them. The old man was white-haired but still as erect as a young sapling. "Tada! see noth-

in' of Winthrop, did you, Cherokee?"

"Ain't been lookin' for him," Cherokee said shortly.

The old man cocked. "Shor'ly and his horse's back cam'. Better tight and all up. You'll never make Calver's 'fore dark." He shaded his eyes and looked at the wakening sun.

"That'd cost money," Cherokee said. "I'll hold out till I get where I'm goin'."

Eppery cocked again. "Might know," he said. He raised his sharp old eyes to the woman. "Maybe you'd like a cup of coffee, ma'am. Treen't cost a cent."

"Ain't got no time to waste," Cherokee said, feeling the gun in his space again and hearing the faint click of a hammer drawing back.

"Doller for the team and two bits a head," Eppery said.

Cherokee got out his leather purse and unfolded it. He deliberately counted out the money. The old man started to speak and then he stopped back and waved his hand. "So long, Cherokee," he said. "Come again."

The horses' hoofs and the wagon wheels combined to make a rumbling thunder on the bridge,

(Continued from page 3)



"I know I don't live here, but I've made some fortunate mistakes in the past."

booming off the walls of the gorge, shutting out all other sound.

They hit the rocks and the wagon jolted and tilted. Cherokee grabbed the woman around the shoulder waist and jumped as the front tilted.

The sheriff's posse were all around the wagon, with their rifles drawn and cocked. "Throw out your gun, Winthrop," the sheriff called. "Come out with hands in the air or we'll fill that wagon full o' lead."

A pistol landed in the dust and then Winthrop himself stood there staring at them. The redrimmed eyes darted from one to the other like a cornered animal, finally resting on Cherokee.

"I'll get you for that," he said.

Cherokee offered the woman his hand. "Hurry," he said, and helped her to the seat. He followed her, gathering up his rifle.

His lips quivered happily.

"Twice me, really," he said. "Any time Cherokee gives a man two bits extra, sure he's wrong. The old man guessed. 'He guesses a dollar for his team 'n wagon and that was all right. It was them three two-bit pieces that made me know somebody was made. An in this country a man just don't hide less somebody's loads' for him. That is for sure."

Cherokee spoke to his horses and they moved out into the twilight away from the bridge. Contentment settled on Cherokee. He'd watched the woman back there and there'd been nothing but relief on her face when Winthrop was taken. He clucked to the horses. "I guess I'm 'bout the best-known feller in these parts," he said. "Most all o' 'em think I'm a kidnifter."

She was silent for a long while. Then her hand reached out and touched his for a moment. "I like a savvy man," she said quietly. ●

Then Santangelo heard a dog growl, and he guessed what was happening. He didn't hesitate. He dumped his pack, pulled his automatic, 32 and dropped to the stones before crawling around the corner. As he expected, three Wehrmacht soldiers and a big snarling "police dog" faced the girl. The Yankee tanker raised his head gun before the first German spotted him, and when the beefy corporal opened his mouth Santangelo put a slug through his right eye. The stumpy NCO was dead before he hit the ground.

Everything happened quickly after that. The bullet-wounded girl went "pho" softly twice more as the most reluctant volunteer of World War II dropped another German with a pair of bullets that sent him teetering off the cliff 120 feet to the rocks below.

At that instant, the huge snarling growled and charged. Santangelo didn't panic. He rolled aside, alarmed the big dog on the side of the head as it hurtled past him and then finished it off with an accurate snap-shot through the back of the neck.

The third member of the enemy patrol turned to run. He covered about eight yards while the US tanker was busy with the four-legged animal. He might have gotten even farther if Brown hadn't stopped him with an expertly thrown knife that penetrated five inches into his back.

"Fantastico! Fantastico!" Angela repeated in awe as she considered the lethal gifts.

"I agree," chimed in the Englishman, pulling out the knife. "For an amateur at this sort of game, Louie, you are one fine shot. Smart too—you used the silence. First rate performance."

"I've heard plenty of Germans with my 30 from the tank," the lean, silver-faced fella said grimly. "But I never killed anybody up close before."

"It may grow on you," the explosives specialist said, grinning, as Santangelo looked the two corpses off the track.

That chore finished, the Pfc straightened and said: "Let's get out of here."

The minutes of walking up the cliff path brought the trio to an elaborate villa at the top. They advanced through the olive groves toward the big house slowly, warily reconnoitering for any more Germans who might be growing nearby. Satisfied that it was safe to proceed, they entered the mansion through a back door.

"Kitchen," Angela announced as she took the turn to the left and led him through a dark room. She opened a door, guided Mrs. down a long corridor and finally flung open another heavy wooden portal.

"Meet my dear sweet Mama," she urged the Allied operatives without warning.

They blinked in the sudden bright-light of 60 candles. It was a wildly decorated living room, all done in glowing red velvet and cluttered with a score of medieval suits of armor. Sipping coffee on green plush sofas in the middle of this weird scene were "Mama" and three of her friends. "Mama" was tall and eye-popping, a lush type with long crimson hair and given lightning eyes. The other women were equally arresting but a bit younger, perhaps 25 or maybe 32 at the outside.

They were staring about as much as angels.

"We are at your service," the Juncoque 34-year-old "Mama" announced proudly as she stood up and saluted. The three busy brunettes beside her also jumped to their feet to bow off equally atrocious "highballs." Before Lou Santangelo could stop him, the impressive English supper returned the salute.

"Mama" was the Contessa Maria Muscogi Travemonte, an ardently anti-Fascist old-bell who was the wealthy widow of a Sicilian Hebrewman killed in a sports car accident in 1938. Since then, she had become passionately involved in a remarkable assortment of causes that had included astrology (1940), health foods (1941) and nudism. She was the president of the Italian Sun-Lovers Association, and had organized a sort of bored young society women in the Licia area into an enthusiastic local chapter.

The countess was an important cog in Operation Harpoon. OSS



"I'll have that fly out of your soup in a moment, sir."

had learned that Mussolini's undercover agents of the Fascist OVRA (the Italian Gestapo) were trying to infiltrate the main Underground organizations on the southern shores of Sicily. Behind this was a frantic Moss effort to learn about the imminent Allied invasion from North Africa.

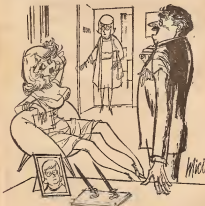
The uninfiltrated countess had at-

ready proved her devotion to the Free World by taking out several US bomber pilots shot down on raids. "She's kind of a . . . well, a democratic nymphomaniac," one B-24 navigator had reported to USAAF intelligence when he finally reached Tunisia, "but pretty damn shrewd in her own nutty way. The Germans don't bother her at all, mostly because the commanding general of their 17th Panzer wants her more than the Iron Cross. She's playing old Bitt master along like a catfish on a 50-pound line, knowing she's got him hooked and can reel him into her bedroom whenever she damn please."

Lou Santangelo wasn't aware of all this, but he had specific orders that he was to avoid contacting the local Underground and must reach his Uncle Rocco only through "Hetty and her group." He was wicker enough to obey, and realistic enough to guess that this peculiar villa might make a perfect hideout from which to strike the underground tank depot.

The 30 acres of grounds were surrounded by a six-foot high wall topped by thorny hedge, a barrier that not only assured the sun-bathers privacy but also screened the Operation Harpoon team from the prying eyes of any German or Fascist patrols. He made up his mind to be politely shock hands with the countess' three dark-haired friends, long-legged Rocco Capelli whose father was the mayor of Licia; heavy-lipped Serena Padellaro who had been an Olympic swimmer for Italy before the war, and the overy-makeup Juliette Sindolani whose lengthy jet tresses failed to cover a huge swelling bosom.

After a few moments of not-quite casual conversation and a



"Miss Smith, take a letter . . . and this time I mean it!"



"By George, I think you're right, Fanny. Those aren't water wings . . ."

tiny cup of strong black demitasse (that he nearly spilled when Signorina Sandefini leaned forward to pass him the sugar), Santiagolo asked to be shown to his room where he could unfold his gear.

"Of course, dear captain," the totally tanned waitress cooed. She had decided that he must be at least a captain since he was in command. And the earnest Pic was too weary to argue with her. "Take him up to the Green Room — next to yours," the waitress suggested to her daughter.

The American trailed Angela up to a large bedroom on the second floor, a chamber decorated in green silk that even covered the walls. She carefully showed him the closet, the toilet — and the connecting door to her room before she left. Santiagolo got the message, but it wasn't the one he had in mind at that moment. That one was the coded radio signal he had to tap out to Blazna to let Darwoody know they had arrived safely.

Just as he finished and started to hide the compact STR-1 short wave transmitter, the Yank heard a crescendo of sounds from the room above. He had a pretty fair idea of what they meant, but he tried to ignore them as he unpacked his weapons and checked each one meticulously. The noises stopped. Santiagolo loaded each gun, made certain the pins on all the explosive and incendiary grenades were taped down, and assembled the stripped — down bazooka that OSS had supplied "for unforeseen emergencies." Then he headed down the hall to try to find Dixon.

It wasn't hard. The shirtless explosives expert was coming down the stairs from the third floor, snoring sleepily as the thimble-ped combats squeaked his arm at hysterically.

"Those English are so very charming," she confided to Lou Santiagolo with an utterly feminine sigh that left nothing to his imagination.

At that, the exhausted GI finally blew his stack. "Lieutenant Dixon! Get the hell downstairs, collect your stuff and hustle your fat butt right up to your room! Now!"

The easygoing officer gasped. "That's an order!" Santiagolo roared at the top of his lungs.

Both the demitasse specialist and the combats wizard as if they'd been slapped.

"Get moving, you damn fool!" the Pic commanded.

That outburst restored some sanity to the proceedings, and Dixon was soon asleep in his own bed with his explosives and Sten gun neatly coiled within easy reach. The incidents didn't even dare to grumble, for Lou Santiagolo's cutting tones had convinced them not to risk any further grief with this hard-bellied American. The captain was young and handsome, but plainly a tough "no nonsense" officer of the old, old school. They were a bit afraid of him — all except Angela, who was secretly pleased by his masculine authority but not intimidated.

They all slept until noon that morning. When they gathered for a breakfast served by two maids whom the combats had converted to sun worshippers, everyone treated Santiagolo with polite respect and deference. That was hardly surprising, for he looked and acted and felt like a battle-tested commander. It was not the gun in his shoulder-holster or the flier that he placed on the chair beside him. It was his manner. With the same cool determination that had moved his mobster father so high in US gangland, Lou Santiagolo took charge of Operation Harpoon with his first cup of coffee at 1235 on the morning of June 28.

"You're going to get your wish to meet my Uncle Rocco, Wilko," he told Dixon flatly.

"I'm ready," the Royal Army sapper answered quietly. An excellent fighting man himself, the Briton realized that the party was over and it was time to get to work.

"Fine, Angela. I want you to put some clothes on and go into town," the American banker continued. "Do you know a man in Lhanta named Rocco Santiagolo?"

"People say that he is of the Black Brotherhood, one of the most powerful clubs," Angela answered evenly, looking the young Yank straight in the eye. "He pretends to make his money from a winery, but everyone knows he is a capo mafioso — a leader."

"Is he a Fascist?"

"He is a mafia don. They have no politics, no creed but that of the jungle."

"Good. Go to the winery," the OSS recruit directed, "and tell him that Don Antonio's son wishes to discuss a matter of great importance. Say that Luigi Santiagolo has come from America, but speak only to him — no other."

"I will do whatever you wish," Angela promised simply.



Then she left. Two hours later, she returned with word that Rocco Santangelo had been both suspicious and non-committal but had finally agreed to meet "Don Antonio's son from America" in the wine warehouse that night at 11 o'clock.

At 9:30 that night, he set out with the 18-year-old girl for the long, circuitous hike through to-mato fields, olive groves, back lanes and side trails that would bypass the Nazi checkpoints ringing Locata.

It was 10:50 pm when they finally reached the crumbling stone wall that enclosed Rocco Santangelo's winery. Though he had changed to a coarse dark suit of a Sicilian peasant, the young GI wasn't taking any chances on being seen by enemy squads that regularly criss-crossed Locata to enforce the curfew. They had almost certainly discovered the holes by the cliff, and the fee was bound to be extra-careful and quick on the trigger. Keeping to the shadows in the alley across the narrow cobblestone street, the American listened for any footstep that might signal danger.

He heard something—the sound of breathing in the alley itself. He turned around casually as if to whisper something to Angela, leaned toward her — and charged at the invisible attacker. He saw the glimmer of a blade in the faint moonlight, swung aside and grabbed the attacker's wrist. It



"Don't give me that baloney about having to work late. You got right out of that bar and come right straight home . . . This has been a recorded message."

snapped like a pencil, and the knife-wielder's scream of pain was choked off only by three swift judo chops to Adam's apple, temple and neck. Santangelo heard

him fall with a thud. The American quickly ripped off the man's bandana, crammed it into his mouth, doubled him up like a folding pingpong table, and tied his hands and feet together with the unconscious assailant's own belt.

"Fantastic!" his lovely brunette guide gaped in admiration.

"Shut up," Lou Santangelo answered in impatient irritation.

The street was clear, and there was no sound of anyone approaching. Slipping the slatted into his own belt, the lean Yank hustled the girl across the street and rapped at the door marked "Vino Santangelo." It opened immediately, and they hurried inside without a word. Two hard-faced men glared at them in unspoken question. Lou Santangelo recognized their look. These were "weekends", the lower echelon muscle types who carried out routine houseings and unimportant errands.

"Don Rocco — immediately," he ordered harshly as a cape hideous world.

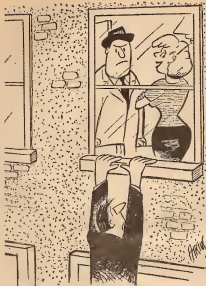
They obeyed at once, for in the brutal Brotherhood "weekends" did what they were told without daring to think or hesitate. They led him across the courtyard, between two long rows of dusty trucks to the storeroom itself. One of the hoodlums pointed toward the brass-studded old door, and the American led Angela into a huge vaulted room crammed with hundreds of barrels in the center — some 30 yards away — a hairy man who resembled a barrel himself waited beside a glowing kerosene lamp.

"I come in the name of Don Antonio from Chicago," the Yank called out boldly as he advanced toward the circle of light.

Gerry Marlowe



"Don't forget to wash your hands when you come home from school. . . you haven't changed a bit."



"Oh, those? . . . I washed out a pair of gloves and put them on the sill to dry . . ."

He knew that a dozen guns were covering him, and that his first false move would also be his last. He walked closer until he saw the fat man clearly.

"Welcome to Lanta, my nephew," the stocky stranger croaked.

Leon Santangelo's reply was an off-beat as Operation Halpoun. He pulled back his hand and slapped the fat man as hard as he could across the mouth.

"Stop those insolent games!" he shouted. "Are the Masters of Lanta all children? Is this the way to greet the son of a great man?"

Angela wondered whether he'd gone mad. Her thought was interrupted by a loud echoing puff, a vicious blow that bounced and reverberated off the wooden eaves as a graying hawk-faced Scutian stepped out of the black Mass.

"It is Luigi Luigi! What a boy! Just like his papa!" the sweetly well-dressed man in the dark silk

suit rejoiced. "It's my brother's boy from Chicago!" he called out proudly.

Leon Santangelo, who had recalled the family photo he'd seen so many times in his youth, recognized that this was the real Rasco. Held a dozen other lanterns black and suddenly on all sides, and it seemed Michael closed in with many greetings. His hunch had paid off, for he'd guessed what they expected from the offspring of a top US racketeer. Now he had to play it to the hilt.

"I kiss your hand, Uncle Rasco," he announced in the traditional ceremonial salutation that the Brotherhood accorded a don.

During the next hour, Leon Santangelo forced down half a bottle of sour-sweet red wine and told the leaders of the local Brotherhood what he wanted. They had to help him find the Mass's secret cove, and to co-operate in crippling the 17th Panzer's tanks stored there.

"Not so easy this work. Stinking patrols everywhere. The Teds—oh, are crazy-soft since this morning when they found three of their men and a dog wiped out by the cliffs," one of the Michael declared.

My captain took two of the soldiers and the wolf-creature all by himself," Angela boasted.

"Batten your lip," the tall GI told her curtly. It was stupid to talk about such things to anyone, for nobody could tell who might be a Nazi stool-pigeon. The girl looked as if she were about to cry at the rebuke, but she remained silent while the American considered the arrangements with his bookstained uncle. "The Brotherhood takes care of its own." Rasco Santangelo promised solemnly a moment before his nephew led her out for the hazardous journey back to the villa.

Angela walked all the way, went to her room in bitter silence. The PIc from the Third Armored tried to forget her while he scanned and radioed another report to OSS in Elmer's, but as he finished he could hear her sobbing through the connecting door. First he eased her vanity, then he swore at Dumosey and Larson for getting him into this miserable deal, and finally he went in to apologize. He sat down wearily on the edge of the bed to try to comfort her, reached out to pat her slim, warm shoulder reassuringly. That did it. Before he could speak, Angela was against him . . .

The next afternoon, a milk vendor delivered a note from "Uncle" reporting that one of his wine trucks had passed a Wehrmacht gasoline convoy raiding five and a half miles west of Lanta. The Scutian driver had attempted to follow the German tank-vehicles only to be stopped by eight heavily armed MPs who warned him to stay out of "this restricted military area".

While Leon Santangelo was sweating out the search for the secret base of the 17th Panzer, three Army counter-intelligence units attached to that German division were trying just as hard to find him. Their instructors had packed up his coded flashes to OSS and efficient radio-location teams were prowling the rural roads in D-F vans nightly. Expecting that the foe would use such trucks with direction-finding equipment, Santangelo and Droop hiked or bicycled several miles from the main by for each transmission. They sent from a different location every time, and kept the messages down to the 60 "number groups" that OSS had recommended. Once, for an important message, they even sat up the radio in a trench on the beach, while Nazi tanks and trucks rumbled by on the road only a few yards away. Lt Col Dumosey kept radioing back urgently for "positive action", which came more rapidly than the Allied team in Sicily expected.

In the pre-dawn hours of July 5, Leon Santangelo was tapping out

a message from a ruined barn north of town while the English demolition expert perched on a trolley on the half-gutted roof. As soon as the American finished, he heard the regular code signal that meant "please repeat because reception poor". He started to do so, and actually sent three-quarters of his report a second time before he was interrupted. A dagger thudded into the floor only inches from his feet, and he looked up to see Dixon waving frantically. The sapper had tossed the knife to warn him. When the midwesterner heard the rumble of an approaching vehicle, he guessed why.

He was right. Only 300 yards away was a German D-F van, its probing antenna pointed directly at the barn. As it moved closer slowly, Lou Santangelo edged back into the darkness and drove two grenades from the pockets of his shabby peasant's jacket. The enemy truck stopped right in front of the sagging building, and four Germans — with machine-pistols stopped out.

They were only a few yards from the doorless portal when "Willy" Dixon hammered them in to the ground with one seven six and burst from his Eren. At the instant that the Dixon snatched them to the earth, Santangelo lobbed his first grenade under the van. It exploded with a blast that buckled the truck chassis, which erupted into flames three seconds later when the GI flipped a thermite bomb into the wreckage.

"This is going to make old General Bittmeaster even more starry," the veteran British behind-the-lines operator predicted.

"It isn't helping my Chapsarian either," Santangelo snapped as he peered up the road swiftly. He knew Dixon was right, that the Nazis would be furious about the messengers — and would mercilessly "raze" the whole province with roundups and raids to hunt down



"I thought I had nothing to live for until a friend introduced me to my wife . . . now all I think of is savings!"

the offenders. The young GI should have been worried, but he was annoyed instead.

His outlook didn't improve at all when they got back to the Villa, for 10 Wehrmacht motorcyclists stood lounging in the driveway guarding an imposing staff car that flew the golden of a German general. Santangelo and Dixon dropped to the ground, stayed from the shrubbery at the bald bullet-headed man who stood

in the window peering west for the column. It was the first time that the American had seen her with her clothes on, and also his first look at the commandant of the 17th Panzer.

"Private Santangelo, meet Major General Otto Ernst Bittmeister," the suave demolition expert whispered mockingly.

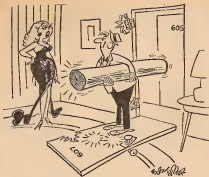
The lean midwesterner swore. Two of Bittmeister's aides were busy peering down the low-cut gowns of Sergeant Fedosieva and the top-heavy Julietta Bardinella, and the sound of photograph made made it clear what was happening. The unpredictable comeliness was entertaining the enemy brass, whose faces and loud laughter confirmed that they were enjoying it immensely.

Lou Santangelo and his partner had to wait in the uncomfortable thickets until nearly 3:00 am when the Germans finally departed with much head biding, heel clicking and a few discreet pinches. After the echoes of the Nazi caravan faded down the road, the Allied agents gathered to find the sun-loving ladies shedding their dresses to return to their usual comfortable nudity. A black-and-blue mark on Signorina Fedosieva showed how hard the punches had been. All three women insisted that the Nazis had arrived unarmed with the pretense that they had "just been passing by".

"Maybe. Maybe they're just getting changed, but they're not fools," Santangelo warned. "Don't try to outsmart those Germans — just stay away from them or you'll



"I'll bring you a cigarette next trip."



"You don't discourage easily do you, Raymond?"

tip our hand by asking the wrong questions."

"But they can tell us about the cave," pouted the tilian-topped customsman.

"We'll get the information some other and safer way," the Yank ordered.

It arrived the next afternoon, in one of the Mafia chieftain's white trucks. Rogvo Santangolo himself was the driver — and the messenger. A good farmer had seen 11 barrels being hauled toward the great stone crag that was known locally as Satan's Peak, a massive black promontory overlooking the coast eight miles west of Lloata.

"That must be the place," the Brotherhood boss assured his nephew. "There used to be plenty of smuggler's caves up there, and the Tedeschi could easily have blasted out the walls between a dozen of them to make that one giant garage you seek. I propose that we attack at once, and I have brought my men."

The young American glanced out at the truck, saw no one.

"There are 15 of my toughest 'workmen' concealed inside the empty barrels," Don Bruce explained solemnly. "and I've brought two more empty casks for you and your helper. We'll pass through the checkpoints, wipe out the sentries near the cave and shoot our way in to bomb those tanks with your excellent Yankee fire grenades."

"I'm willing to try it," the mid-westerner answered after a few moments. "What do you think, Willie?"

"Damn clumsy because they'll have more troops inside, but I'll take a whack at it," the Englishman agreed.

They loaded the explosives and their fires, climbed into the casks and started off toward Satan's Peak. It was cramped and stifling hot inside the barrels, with only a little air entering through the one-inch bangholes in the sides.

After 30 minutes of this suffering, the concealed commandos felt the truck slow down for the first checkpoint. They heard the Mafia

leader mutter something to the Nazi sentries, then an exchange of laughter as the vehicle picked up speed again. It was 4:50 by the time the truck passed the third empty post, and at 5:05 it arrived to a creaking halt.

"Everybody out," Rogvo Santangolo urged as he dropped the tailgate.

One by one, the 16 half-suffocated hoodlums wriggled from their pitch-black prisons to stand blinking and stretching in the still bright July sunlight. Two of the "workmen" vomited, and another crumpled when his cramped legs gave way under him. Within 15 minutes, however, they were all moving slowly in a long skramish-line toward the mountain only a mile away. They got to within 600 yards of the black volcanic crag before their plan literally blew up in their faces.

One of the Mafia hit an invisible trip-wire, setting off the buried charge that killed him instantly. Another stepped on a "booby-trap" antipersonnel mine that flew up into the air, exploding a rain of steel shavings that reduced him to agony. Two more booby-traps went off before a Nazi mortar crew began pounding this patch of woods with round after round, the blasts barely covering the chaos above that began to howl a hellish call to the security troops in a nearby camouflage bunker. The soldiers fought back courageously, killing more than 30 of the 16 with rifles, automatic weapons, and C&S-supplied grenades as they stubbornly tried to shoot their way inside.



"Shake! Any friend of Israel's is a friend of mine."

It was hopeless. The "workmen" and the two Allied agents were outnumbered seven to one by battle-tested soldiers, and none of the attackers perished before Roque Santangelo yelled the order to withdraw. They started to run, but only five men reach the truck. They jumped aboard as the Mafia chief jumped the motor desperately, roaring away only seconds before their Wehrmacht pursuers burst on to the road with machine-guns blazing. They had to abandon the truck two miles away, sprinting up as the sun began to descend. The march back toward Lanta was a nightmare, for not only were dozens of motorized patrol cars, but the avenging General Rittermeyer sent up five light Storch observation planes to drop bombs.

It was a miracle that Leo Santangelo and Dixon somehow staggered into the villa at dawn, sweating and yoked by the futile blood-seeking. The situation looked completely hopeless. It was July 7. Allied troops would be landing in Sicily within 72 hours, and Santangelo's beaches hitting the Lanta beaches would be smashed head-on by Rittermeyer's concentrated steamroller. With the Mafia wrecked, Operation Harpoon seemed doomed.

"We don't have the men or the explosives," Santangelo brooded grimly. All of Dixon's plastic had been lost in the wild cross-country escape, and none could be purchased in by OSS in time.

All that day the German scout planes dogged over the whole area. The roads were closed to civilian traffic "until further notice," for Rittermeyer was taking no further chances. Now that the Nazi general realized what was up, he sealed off every gully and trail that led toward his key underground base.

That night after dinner, the peculiar Concetta Maria Misoglia Travento came up with a plan of her own.

"Absolutely crackers," judged Willie Dixon.

"Natty. Natty. Natty. It can't possibly work," concurred Leo Santangelo.

"Mama's notions are . . . strange, but do you have any better suggestions?" shut Angela asked abruptly.

Santangelo shook his head. Dixon shook his head. They glanced at the woman, shrugged and nodded. It was a million-to-one scheme, but they had to try it.

At 3:00 a.m. on the morning of July 9, seven semi-nude women and two determined men set out from the Villa Travento in the moonlight to attack one of the most impenetrable bases in Nazi Europe. The males were wearing their uniforms, for if they were to perish on this suicide mission they wanted to die as soldiers. The strange column trekked silently to the cliff, descended the trail to the beach where Santangelo and Dixon had landed and retrieved the hidden raft. They in-



"Isn't that the lady who christened this ship last month?"

stated it with a tank of cooking gas, and the men climbed aboard it with their flares and the bazookas. The women surrounded the float as it drifted off the sand, and began sawing it slowly up the coast. Under the leadership of ex-Olympic swimmer Sorena Padachis, they paddled steadily with the help of the swift moving current that carried them west. The two Allied agents, each frantically with packs of grenades, were surprised by the speed that their ignominious craft made up the rocky shore.

Shortly before five o'clock, the tired but proud women pulled the raft up on a narrow rocky shelf at the base of the towering black crag. The entire group lashed themselves together with a 50-foot rope, and started to climb the almost sheer wall.

Somewhere — by sheer stubbornness — the young American finally led his old flock up on to the top 30 minutes later. They were shiv-

ering with fatigue and their muscles were twitching, but they untied themselves and took their bearings. They were less than 300 yards from the gaping mouth of the cave. A tommygun toting guard dozed on each side of the opening, facing inland because everyone with any brains knew that the cliff could not be scaled.

The raiders moved closer. When they were 70 yards from the opening, they could see the illuminations cast by powerful floodlights inside. They were inside the mine fields, so they inched around until they could peer directly into the shaft. It was an amazing sight, a huge, high-ceiled chamber with several tanks only 20 yards inside. Santangelo put down his bazooka, pulled the woman's gun and silently slew one of the sentries. The other raised his machine pistol as he saw his partner crumple, and the sharpshooting midwestern cut him down with two more bullets.



"She certainly manages to get out of a dress just about everything she puts into it."

As he fell, the German's Schmeisser hit the rocks with a noisy clatter. The impact released the safety catch, and the automatic gun shattered an ear-splitting burst that wiped out any chance of surprise. Five more soldiers charged up the tunnel toward the mouth, only to be whipsawed by bursts from the Bronx in the arms of the centenas and her young daughter. Amused at the sight of the half-dad women and shocked by the sudden attack, the Wehrmacht survivors dodged back to avoid the grenades being thrown by Dixon and the two maids.

At that moment, busy Julietta Sandstein and long-legged Rosette Capelli sprang forward to try to seize the guns dropped by the dead snipers. As they reached the corpses, a sudden roar belched from the mouth of the cave. Lou Santangelo saw one of the massive Tiger tanks rolling forward, picking up speed as a Nazi lieutenant yelled orders.

The tall, thin GI dropped low, raised his bazooka and sighted carefully. The enemy vehicle was only 20 feet from the opening when Lou Santangelo pressed the trigger. He didn't miss. The rocket blazed swift and true to its mark, penetrating the Tiger's hull and exploding inside to wipe out the crew instantly. The tank erupted into flame, belching choking black smoke that blinded the other Germans inside the subterranean base. The fire reached the Tiger's cannon shells, which began to

blast deafeningly in all directions.

"Let's go!" the Americans ordered.

He turned around, saw that two of his male comrades were dead and another was bleeding from a bullet wound in her stomach. She tried to crawl toward the shaft in

one final effort, but her life was looking out on the rocks too swiftly.

Santangelo hustled Dixon and the four remaining women back to the cliff, and they went down a lot faster than they had scaled it. Gashed and bruised on the sharp volcanic projections, they reached the bottom just as they left the whole side of the mountain shudder. Something had exploded inside the cave — something big.

They launched the raft, all clutched aboard and let it drift out in the current. The tide was running even stronger now, so they were a mile away when the entire top of Satan's Peak was blasted off in an enormous explosion. A huge pillar of fire spewed skyward, resembling the nightmare scene of an eruption of Mount Aetna.

The current carried the raft out into the Mediterranean, where a mine-sweeper covering the advance of the Allied invasion flotilla picked them up that night.

Less than two hours after their rescue, U.S. British and Canadian armies stormed ashore on Sicily. There was heavy fighting for Patton's troops near Laccia, but they broke inland because the enemy had almost no tanks in the immediate vicinity. The fantastic shock and dagger mission saved thousands of GI lives.

Lou Santangelo, who got a battlefield commission for his exploit, later married young Angela Trevisento. She inherited the "countess" title in 1929 when her mother died, but doesn't talk to her California neighbors about her noble name. Under strict orders from her investment banker husband, she never mentions Operation Hornet or ether. \*



"Have you been coaching her? That's the same line that landed me."

## MERCY MISSION

(Continued from page 22)

O'Keefe, apparently, intended to fly out to Hallett's Reef and back—and then, perhaps, report to the authorities. That was a pretty serious thing to do.

What was going to happen if O'Keefe struck trouble out there? A man could lose his license over a thing like that—ignoring authority. The book laid down some pretty strict regulations. It was unthinkable . . . against all training, remembrance and authority.

On the other hand, what the devil would happen if the Auster developed engine trouble? And what about navigation? Hallett's Reef was a pretty small pinpoint to hit on the nose even with an expert navigator in charge. And what about the margin of safety—the point of no return? It was all very well for O'Keefe to say he'd have 20 minutes time to fly around the reef and still have 15 minutes of fuel left when he returned to base. In theory he might have . . . but you couldn't always rely on theory.

Realizing they were all still watching him, Saud knew he had to say something. "There must be someone else who will go with you," he said lamely. inwardly he felt guilty and depressed. He knew he had failed somewhere—but he wasn't quite sure where. Even mercy missions had to be looked at rationally.

"I hoped it might be you," O'Keefe said pointedly. "I want to get some sleep. By the time I look around town and get someone it could be after midnight. I'd sooner go by myself than waste all that time."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Sinclair. Jean introduced Saud and related a brief account of the evening. "I'm going out to Hallett's Reef at dawn and John's going with him," she finished.

Saud nodded his head. It was the only thing he could do.

"How wonderful!" Mrs. Sinclair looked at Tom O'Keefe. She was an older version of her daughter and John Saul admired her. "I'll go and cut some sandwiches."

"No—no," O'Keefe said hurriedly. "We'll have a snack before taking off. We'll be back for breakfast."

"And a large thermos of coffee," Mrs. Sinclair was ticking off her chores mentally. Then she looked at him. "I wasn't thinking of you or John—survivors. They might be starving. You can drop the food to them. I'll pack it in a good strong hamper."

"Thanks," O'Keefe said simply. "Thanks a lot, Ruth. I wasn't thinking of that."

Hallett's Reef came up slowly out of the brightening day ahead . . . a darkening line on the horizon and off on the starboard bow of the Auster. Saud pointed to it with a sense of relief.

O'Keefe grunted, "Hit off my



"You're probably wondering what I'm doing here . . ."

course." He sounded disgusted with his navigation. With the changed course, the golden pathway of the sun across the sea altered from right to line left.

Saud looked down at the sea, conscious of the boat that had ridden with him for the whole time. The tension built up inside him. He fought it down for the 20th time—a nausea, a real and compelling fear. Only once before had he flown in so small a plane . . . a 20-minute joy ride in a Tiger Moth for the fun of it.

The Auster, small and cramped with its single noisy engine out front, gave him no confidence. And the sea beneath was too close for his liking. He was used to seeing the Pacific from great heights. From up there where the jets operated, the sea was a great rolling gray chess that was meaningless in its utter remoteness. But here, in the noisy, slow Auster, the sea persisted in being too real—it had been like that all the way—and it would be like that all the way back to Suva.

There was no chance of survival if the engine packed up. Not a life raft or a belt anywhere in the cabin. O'Keefe had just clambered into the plane and set off over the ocean.

Saud argued mentally that a man of O'Keefe's experience would have seen to all such things before he left. The obvious things . . . a few life-belts . . . a survival kit . . . the correct course. Hall! There wasn't even a map! The man just sat there and kept flying.

Yet, strangely enough, Hallett's Reef had come out of the horizon to greet them. Saud was still unable to concede a point on that. It could have been sheer luck. Even O'Keefe had admitted he'd been off course a little.

"Thirty knots wind down there," O'Keefe broke into his thoughts. Saud looked up at the inverted blue bowl of the sky, feeling the sickness again. Now the devil did the man know that. By the same token, how the devil had he found his way to the reef with nothing but a compass to guide him. With-

out being really conscious of it. Saul felt renewed respect for the older man.

"Here, you fly her while I take a gender with the glasses," O'Keefe said suddenly. With a shock Saul realized he was being asked to fly the Auster. His mind recoiled. The altimeter showed 300 feet above the sea—the airspeed indicator 10. He felt he couldn't do it. He wanted height to practice with. He had only to make one mistake—one slight mismove of hesitation in making a decision—and they'd finish up in the drink. "I can't fly the damned thing!" he protested angrily.

"It's as good a time to learn as ever then," O'Keefe grinned. "What to do is plastered on every knob and hooper . . . written in plain English and, believe me, they're right."

Saul did not feel rebuffed. He was beginning to know this man. He put his hands on the stick gingerly and dabbed with his feet. Opening the throttle a little, he was surprised to find that things did happen in response to his simple movements. The Auster,

O'Keefe had told him earlier, would almost fly itself.

"Bring her down to 200," O'Keefe said briskly, "and ease up on the gas. There's no tower out here." He was busy covering the approaching reef with the glasses.

The sense of responsibility flooded in on Saul. Twenty minutes flying time at the reef . . . 150 miles back over the sea . . . 15 minutes fuel left when they reached Sereva. The margin was too small for comfort. He felt the sweet break out on the palms of his hands, knowing that his fear was becoming a real thing now. If he didn't watch it carefully he'd lose control of himself and the plane.

"There she is!" O'Keefe barked, startling Saul. "It's the Boyita—high and dry on her side. Drop down and pull out at 100 and get 'in a barrel' as we go over. They might be asleep."

Fear prickling down his spine, Saul let the Auster fall away, her engine rattling. His arms and legs felt like tensed springs. It was hard for him even to breathe.

"Hell," O'Keefe roared, "show

her nose down, son. We'll miss by a mile!"

Instinctively Saul pressed on the stick. The Auster seemed to hang in the sky, nose down, while the sea rushed up to welcome them.

"Pull her nose up!" O'Keefe roared. "Do you want to get our feet wet?"

Saul pulled back on the stick, opened the throttle—and with a surge of power the Auster cleared for the sky.

"That ought to flush 'em out!" O'Keefe yelled. "Here they come! One . . . two . . . three. Where the hell is Carroll?"

"There's 15 minutes left," Saul interrupted.

"So what?" O'Keefe snapped. "That's more than plenty. Fly down the eastern side of the reef and up the other. Maybe Carroll's gone off on her own."

Saul looked, catching a glimpse of the long narrow reef rising from the sea as the Auster came round, then straightened to the southeast.

"Well, that's that," O'Keefe said presently. "Come round and fly up the other side—and here's hoping—" His voice trailed off as if he didn't want to complete his thoughts.

Saul glanced at his watch—eight and a half minutes left. Not much longer to the point of no return. He saw the sea move away from his left side, then, a moment or so later, appear on his right. He opened the throttle, wanting to get this thing over and done with—and head back to the security of land . . . if they could reach it.

"I wouldn't do that," O'Keefe observed quietly. "She's more economical on gas where you had her."

Feeling the throttle back, Saul suppressed his growing anxiety. O'Keefe gave a convulsive start, strutting himself up from his seat and half out the open window, his fingers glued to his eyes.

"There she is! On that stuff where the palms are! Drop down until a get a better look, boy. Yes, there's the stuff! That's better—keep her down here."

His body was stiff as the plane roared up the eastern side of the reef. "It's Carroll, all right! And do you know what she's doing? Painting those damned palms against the rising sun!" He burst into thunderous laughter, interlarded with loud exclamations of wonder. "Can you beat that? Shipwrecked! Painting bloomin' palms against the sun! She hardly had time to look up and wave as we flew past. What a woman! Where would you find another woman like her?"

Saul put the Auster's nose up, pleased to get distance between himself and the sea. Five minutes left! He felt the sweat on his palms again. Did O'Keefe realize that time was running out? He mentioned it to the older man.

"Rubbish!" O'Keefe snorted. "If you have five minutes fuel left—or even three—when you get to



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"Save you'll still be all right!" He took over the controls. Saul growled back in his seat trying hard to relax.

O'Keefe took the Auster to the southeast, came round in a tight circle, put the nose down on a long glide back in to the reef again. The sea and the reef came up to them slowly, the little patches of turbulence buffeting the wings.

"Boy," O'Keefe said tersely. "Take hold of the controls and follow what I'm doing. I'll give you one run in like this then I want you to bring her in exactly like I'm doing now. There's a nor-easter blowing. We came in in the teeth of it. When we got down to the reef I'm going to hold her into that breeze with her wheels on the sand. That's what I want you to do next time in. When you've got her like that I'm going to step right out the door and leave you to take her back to Sava."

Incredulously Saul swung round to face him. "You're mad!"

"Mad or not—that's what I'm going to do," O'Keefe said stubbornly. "If my wife down there all on her own I should be with her."

"You're stark staring mad!" Saul said helplessly. It was then he realised that the Auster was stationary with her wheels on the sand. He held his breath. He knew he wasn't drowning—that sort of thing could be done. The Auster's speed was down to that of the handwind. . . O'Keefe, with masterly jockeying, was holding her still. But flying of this kind took practice and an iron nerve. Saul felt the sweat break out all over him at the man's colossal nerve.

O'Keefe gripped the throttle and the Auster climbed away in a steep bank. He made a motion to Saul to take over the controls.

"I can't do it!" Saul said vaguely. "Haven't you got any idea what you're asking me to do?"

"Yep. Sure do. It's my plane but I've got no objection to that," O'Keefe said amiably. "All you've got to do is sit here and fly. It's me that's going to step out the door."

"I won't do it!" Saul said angrily. "You can go to hell, O'Keefe!"

"Well, we might both do that," O'Keefe grinned at him. "If you won't do this one thing for me, boy, then we'll just keep flying around until the petrol's gone. Maybe we'll both be knocking at Saint Peter's door then, eh? How's the time holding on at?"

"We're one minute in the red already!" Saul said quickly. "You're mad, O'Keefe!"

"Just about as hairy as they make 'em," O'Keefe admitted with another grin. "But on the other hand, boy—something could be wrong with my wife. . . or those others, for that matter. Look at it this way, boy. How'd your conscience be if we both fly back to Sava, and learn later—too late—that something could have been done to save a life or two? How

would you feel about it if it was your wife down there—and there was a chance of you dropping in to see how she was?"

As he let the Auster fall away slowly toward the atoll, Saul put all thought out of his mind. He was determined not to think—just sit there and react to O'Keefe's commands. He listened for O'Keefe's quiet voice while the sea came up gradually and the reef became larger.

O'Keefe forced the cabin door open. Cool wind swept into the cabin, causing the plane to rock alarmingly until the pressure equalised. "It'll be a bit draughty on the way back—slow up your speed a little—but that will be compensated by my not being with you," O'Keefe remarked laconically. "Now you're doing fine, boy, real fine. Just keep it up all the way now—and I'll be mighty proud of you as a flyer. Ease up on the throttle now—just a little. Good. Now, when you feel I've stepped out, pull up your stick, gun the throttle—and get the hell for home. You'll just about make it. Good luck."

He was gone before Saul realised it. The Auster seemed to lift into the air. Saul pulled back on the stick, opened the throttle and glanced back over the tail of the plane. There was a softening spray and widening rippling in the lagoon near the atoll. He saw O'Keefe beginning to thrash his way toward shore. Saul breathed again.

Jean was on the airstrip when Saul set the Auster down. He switched off the muzzling engine, feeling his tension unwind. He wasn't game to look at the fuel gauge. When he climbed out, his legs were stiff and trembling, he stood firmly on the ground thankful that it was under his feet at long last.

"Tim?" Jean asked, after she kissed Saul. Her eyes looked big and concerned.

"Oh, he dropped off for a cup of tea or something with his wife," he said lightly.

The world, suddenly, had become a wonderful place, full of light and warmth and wonderment. He put his arm around Jean—slowly they walked to her father's car. Later—after his nerves had unwound, after his muscles had uncramped themselves and the tightness in his throat had eased—he would tell her about the trip. At the moment he was grateful for her silence.

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## MATABELE VIRGIN DANCE

(Continued from page 15)

Even more intriguing was the mystery surrounding Lobengula's treasure after he died. It took more than half a century of intensive searching to find the grave of the Matabele ruler. But the recent discovering of the grave only intensified the mystery of Lobengula's hidden wealth — a cache of diamonds and gold estimated to be worth anywhere from 10,000,000 to 35,000,000 dollars at the least.

So the search for Lobengula's treasure goes on, but a few clues, recently found, indicate that it could soon be over — unless Lobengula's old clerk, the mahema, who were by his side when he died, planted the clues to mislead treasure-seekers.

Lobengula was the son of the redoubtable Zulu warrior-king Mosilikatse ("The Pathway of Blood"), who crossed the Limpopo into what is now Northern Rhodesia and founded his own tribe,

the Matabele ("Children of the Stars").

After Mosilikatse's death in 1870 he was succeeded by Lobengula. This was the year that Cecil Rhodes landed in Africa. Kimberley's diamond fields were discovered, and Jan Smuts was born. According to custom, Lobengula built himself a new capital called Bulawayo ("The Place of Killing"), where he wielded his warriors into a formidable military machine and became the most powerful monarch in Africa.

Lobengula scorned European clothing and wore a kilt of baboon tails and a leopard-skin gown. Although he allowed Christian missionaries into his country, he never became a Christian himself, preferring the superstitions of Nungu, his witch doctor, who lived in a cave in the lonely Matopos.

This gloomy cavern held such a fascination even for Cecil Rhodes that the great Empire builder expressed a wish to be buried there, his tomb lying in a spot he named "The View of the World."

Lobengula's reign coincided with the great gold and diamond rushes in Africa. The first diamonds to come into his possession were smuggled in by his subjects — secreted under armpits, in hollow teeth, or by swallowing them — and presented as tribute. Fascinated by the shining stones, for which the white men would commit any crime to obtain, Lobengula set about getting as many of them as possible. He heard that Rhodes was having difficulty generating sufficient labor to work his mines and offered to supply him with several thousands of his subjects as workers.

Rhodes accepted this "generous" offer and soon great strides of the Matabele went to work in the diamond fields. Lobengula changed the gauge every few months and each returning Matabele brought his king a shining tribute in flaked diamonds, mostly uncut Kimberley blue-white.

Lobengula also developed a weakness for champagne. The wine came to Bulawayo by the wagon load, presented by European concessionaires in return for the right to dig for gold, the metal which later led Rhodes to take over Matabele land, stock and herds.

Nungu, the witch doctor, warned the monarch against the overreaching fortune seekers pouring into the kingdom, prophesying that the whites would eventually devour the Matabele lands like swarms of hungry locusts. Lobengula, however, was no fool. To everyone, whether British concession seeker or floor hunter, he gave a little to maintain peace. He knew the folly of resisting the whites.

In 1888 Rhodes, though barely 28, reached the peak of his power, creating the world's mightiest diamond combine by amalgamating all the Kimberley mines, and becoming the most powerful political figure in Africa. A man of ambitious greed, Rhodes now turned his attention to obtaining control of another of South Africa's resources — gold.

The only man who stood in the way of his becoming the master of the entire Transvaal paid of gold was Paul Kruger, the great floor leader, in whose domain most of the mines lay. Kruger, with his own ambitions of gaining power, entered into a secret pact with Lobengula. No sooner had the Matabele royal "Seal of the Great Elephant" been affixed on the pact than German colonists sent by Harnack appeared in Bulawayo to negotiate a similar treaty.

Rhodes, alarmed that his schemes might be wrecked, sent a representative to Lobengula offering — in return for repudiating the Matabele king's treaty with Kruger, and in return for the right to develop the minerals and metals of Matabele — a monthly stipend of 100 pounds for life.

The messenger who brought this provocative offer to Loben-

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gula was Kurt, and his wife Eyvette.

It's an ironic note of history which caused fate to smile on Rhodes.

Eyvette was already the talk of the Kimberley district. She was the only Afro-European who had cracked the white man's social world. Such news had travelled fast into the bush. And when she decided to accompany her husband to the Matsiabe stronghold, Lobengula — himself of Zulu footstomps — had planned to honor her.

The honor was to participate with him in the diurnum ritual. Knowing the mood of the white man, the wily king had taken no chances. He had placed von Brandt under "protective arrest," so that the engineer would not interrupt the proceedings.

Two days following the ritual, von Brandt and his wife, still fearing the worst, were brought once more before the king. They were given clothes and welcomed as the honored guests at a feast.

The engineer finally brought up Rhodes' offer at the lifeline stipend.

The king looked long and hard at Kurt, then cast a sardonic look at the now fully-clad and well-dressed Eyvette. And against the protests of his councillors, he agreed to accept the offer. He bade von Brandt to return to Kimberley to notify Rhodes.

The astonished engineer agreed, Kurt and his wife returned home under the full protection of 20 Matsiabe warriors.

As they walked out of the bush, von Brandt finally had the courage to ask his half-Zulu wife about that terrible night. Had she been afraid? Certainly. Why had she meekly walked to the platform? Knowledge, she replied. What knowledge, von Brandt asked.

"A Zulu chief," she explained, "cannot defile his office by lying low with a woman outside the tribe. He couldn't have made love to me even if he'd wanted to," the black-eyed Eyvette explained. "The Matsiabe were once Zulus. They are honorable men."

Lobengula was to find that the British were not so honorable. His wise men had been right. The Matsiabe were doomed.

The late Lobengula found he was trapped into giving up most of his lands, and tried to back out of the deal. Rhodes, threatening to enforce his part of the bargain, marched in on Bulawayo with a strong force of British troops.

Lobengula wisely placed all his treasure-filled safes in a caravan of ox carts, sent off to Bulawayo, and with his favorite general, Mapogwe, his secretary, five palace chiefs and an endless regiment, fled northward into the jungle.

Fearing that the heavily-laden ox carts would slow down their flight, Lobengula ordered the treasure to be buried in a

secluded spot. After the robbers had excavated holes and buried the safes, he executed all of them, so that the secret of the hiding place might be kept among as few as possible. The secretary, fearing his own safety, quietly deserted Lobengula.

Lobengula escaped across the Shangani (a tributary of the Zambezi) only to be killed by ambush. As he lay dying, the king summoned the five advisors who had accompanied him, swore them to secrecy regarding the hiding place of the treasure and ordered them to make their peace with Rhodes to avoid further bloodshed. The king then swallowed a vat of poison, with Mapogwe following suit.

The secret of Lobengula's grave was kept for more than half a century, until it was revealed by a Matsiabe rain goddess who betrayed it to her white lover.

When the Native Commissioner for Southern Rhodesia and a small government party, at the request of the surviving advisors who had accompanied Lobengula's flight, examined the king's grave they found only a skull and a few crushed bones — and the elaborate chair presented to the king by Queen Victoria.

The old chiefs looked on in silence, then one of them said, "It was our desire that the grave should never be found and its secret never revealed. But now there is no reason why we should remain silent any longer."

Thereupon the story of Lobengula's buried treasure came to light for the first time, along with details of the king's last days. But none of the chiefs would utter a word on the whereabouts of the treasure.

So, somewhere OUT in the dense Rhodesian bush lies a vast hoard of gold and precious diamonds, packed in rusty iron safes. With the scientific equipment available to treasure seekers today, it should be only a matter of patience and endurance for the treasure to be found. Unless, of course, you believe in the old witch doctor's tale that the treasure leaves its protection by the spirit of Lobengula. \*

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## RETURN TO GLORY

(Continued from page 55)

Now they sat and waited—silent and a little horrified—for the hero to strike this four-stricken parody of a matador.

Halfway through the pitiable facia the bull stopped midway on a charge and heeled. The Wolf jumped back, but too late. The tip of the horn had ripped the shirt open from right to left. The Wolf stared down stupidly at the festering whiteness of the rib before the blood swiftly turned it scarlet.

And then suddenly with the letting of the blood it seemed as if some mystic rite had been performed upon him—as if the bull had been a great spilling blood to create life.

The fear had gone like some gathering ghoul torn from his shoulder. The drawing of his own blood had purged him of all like a wound healed in fire.

Suddenly again the foot was firm, the wrist was deft, the eye was clear.

The matador reared and twisted, a cloth of magic luring the bull, mystifying, teasing, deluding. The bull charged again and again, howls, charging the sand desperately, horns vainly seeking over-elusive flesh.

The crowd came alive from its frozen silence, cheering, rising to its feet.

The bull, breathing heavily, stopped charging and stood glaring, head down.

The Wolf, sword in hand, poised himself and called to the bull.

It came at last, a slivering monster making one last desperate attempt to destroy this creature that had changed from a frightened target spilling of fear to a dancing tiger of maddening cleverness.

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The Wolf wasted, feet nailed to the ground, and the screams of the women had come before he moved. He went in over the night, the sword striking like silver lightning.

The bull staggered and then went on the sword half-deep between the shoulders. He turned and charged again—and in the middle of the charge dropped to his knees and died.

The Wolf walked back to the fence, the crowd going away.

The old crowd handler spat and grunted. "Looo, matador—but great!"

The Wolf grunted back. "Thanks, oldman."

He looked up at her and he could see her standing, waving, and even where he was he could see the tears on her cheeks...

He went down to the car with them, the hard-eyed man waving.

"I thought it was a waste of time but I came back and watched. At first you were terrible but later—later none, you were a rap-ture, a dream. We'll hold these promoters up to ransom—we'll make thousands—millions. I'll see you don't fight for less than —" he babbled on.

They had reached the car and the girl got in. She gave The Wolf a long look, full of the un-narrowed excitement of a woman. She said softly, "You're not coming, are you?"

"Is that a quick look at her and then he relaxed, smiling. He shook his head.

The hard-eyed man stared, thunderstruck. "What—how—? Not coming?"

The girl ignored him. She said, looking steadily at The Wolf, "You did it to see if you were still a man. Now that you've found out you are you're going to settle for that vacante with her, aren't you?"

He nodded. The hard-eyed man spluttered, "What foolishness is that? What—?"

The girl said, "Let there be luck, matador. Stop squawking and get in, Pace. You'll have to find another faccinno."

He turned and went back inside. The boy, seeing him coming, started to run to him, screaming, "El Lobo—El Lobo—you're not going away, Mama, mama—he's not leaving—"

He picked the boy up and walked toward her. She stood waiting, speechless, loving him with her eyes.

He thought, "It's going to be okay on that farm." ■

## BOOBY-TRAPPED

(Continued from page 57)

But if the wires are arranged so that, the instant he answers the phone contact is made, well, that's that. It's the final coil as far as he is concerned. A certain twisted satisfaction to it in addition because virtually he is his own executioner—his own act of lifting the handset off its cradle destroys him. Destroys him completely because the charge exploded directly beside him. Instant death guaranteed.

All this was dawning through my mind as I dropped to my knees beside the table. I gave a sort of half-scream. There they were! The thin, practically invisible wires. And there was the detonator and the charges! My hands were trembling as I reached forward to render the detonator harmless. So much so that I had to stop for a moment to get myself under control. And then, practically before I knew it, the job was done and the entire device disconnected. With a sigh of relief I leaned back on my heels, my head bowed with the top of the table. I forced a smile. Then it happened—the phone started ringing.

Automatically, despite everything, my hand reached out toward it. My confused brain managed to flash its warning signal just in time.

My hand stopped, then slowly withdrew. Lifting that receiver would be tantamount to putting an announcement in the papers insinuating that the booby-trap had failed. Because chances were that the caller was the death-merchant himself endeavoring to set off his own booby-trap. If I answered it and got beyond the word, "Hello", he'd realize straight away that something had gone wrong. Immediately he'd proceed with some alternative or stand by plan to dispose of me. And I wanted time. I desperately wanted time in order that I could try to trap my would-be killer. So I let the phone keep on ringing.

I rose. While so doing, I happened to glance out of the window. And in the phone booth directly opposite down in the street below I saw a figure. My conclusion struck me with all the force of a sudden gale—this was the man. Yes, this was the guy. He just couldn't resist dialling my number from a nearby phone booth so that, when I answered, he'd experience the exquisite, ecstatic thrill of actually witnessing the explosion.

I started moving. Quickly. I went down those stairs three at a time. I dashed across the street belling myself that if I time the phone away from him and found that all he was getting was the dialling tone then I'd be pretty certain I had the right man. Not conclusively, mark you, but enough to set me working on him. I watched the door of the booth open. A little man with watery

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knows only one sample of his craft behind him.

The reason for this, once you reflect on it, is obvious — if the victim doesn't discover one of the traps, well, he's seen trying on a pair of wings for size or guessing

up for his shroud, depending on the kind of life he's led. And if by some chance one of the traps didn't work, on the law of averages the other will, but supposing the victim's a smart character, a suspicious one. He snuffed around until he finds what he's afraid he will find — a body-trap. He disconnects it. Then he sits back and lets his relief eat its comforting blanket around him. After a while he maybe even starts congratulating himself on his cleverness at discovering the infernal device. And a short while after that, in this dazed and unexpecting state of mind, he walks right into the second trap.

That's what I had nearly done — walked right into the other trap which was bound to be there. I was still rigid in the chair, my eyes blinking worse than ever as the sweat continued to trickle down into them. Supposing the chair itself had been rigged. No, that was stupid — if it had been I would have been dead by now. Nevertheless, I slowly rose and examined it. After that I began to go over the still unexamined parts of the room inch by inch.

I had almost completed my checking when my eye fastened on the small radio I kept on a shelf. That would be it! Yes, the second one would be in that radio. Boy, when it came to being stupid I just about took the jackpot — that damned radio should have been one of the very first things in the room to come under suspicion. I took a step toward it. Then I stopped — better finish checking the rest of the place first just to make sure. I did so. There was absolutely no other trap of any sort anywhere in the room. So it had to be the radio.

I removed the electrolytic plug from its socket and carefully — oh, so very carefully — lifted the radio from its shelf and placed it on the table. I pulled up a chair and sat down. Then I gently with drew the four screws which held the cardboard backing. As I removed this backing I immediately spotted the charge and detonator. The latter was wired to the ON-OFF switch. All I had needed to do to blow myself to oblivion was to switch on the radio.

I was trembling now. To such an extent that I had to stop for

a few seconds to get a grip on my self. When I had managed to do so I dismantled the beakish mechanism. I then put it all in a drawer together with the explosive, detonator, etc. which had been wired to the phone. I'd dispose of that later. In the floor.

But meantime I needed a drink. Really. I poured myself a large one. Then I sat down. I had some deep thinking to do before I made my move. The move which, I hoped, would reveal who had planted those two body-traps.

An hour later I had my list of suspects narrowed down to three. A lot of three compiled partly by deduction and partly by hunch. In my heart I felt that one of these three people was the body-trapper.

My Number One suspect was Josef Stowald. A Pole, now not unliked. He'd fought, I knew, with General Anders in Italy where he had been something of an expert in demolition. I also knew one or two other things about Stowald. These, added to one important fact, made him my likeliest candidate. That fact was that he was absolutely on his beam ends financially and had let it be known in certain circles that he was so desperate that he'd do anything for money. And by "anything" he meant just that. Yes, Stowald was top of the list all right. There were one or two of the Big Boys who'd dearly love to see the end of the way — and he was just the man they'd most likely like to effect this.

Suspect Number Two was Peter Jarrow. I'd first met him during the war, in Egypt. We were resting fast then, before Rommel's Africa Corps. And in this retreat Jarrow's main function was the laying of body-traps to delay the advancing Germans. A cool, fearless type he was then, and I found myself admiring him for his courage. I'd met him again later when, under Montgomery, we were knocking the Germans for six. He was still on body-traps but now he was searching for the things in order to dismantle them. That was the last I saw of him during the war.

When I met him next he was in deep, but really deep, with Anderson's crowd. And to be part of Anderson's setup you had to be a truly rotten member of the human race. My previous admiration for him was, therefore, replaced by a profound contempt. A contempt which I expressed quite openly when I heard of some of the jobs he'd done for Anderson. Heartless, dirty jobs.

Maybe you think all this should have put Jarrow to the top of my list. And it would have had it not been for the fact that I had never crossed Anderson — and I didn't think Jarrow would try to kill me just because I'd openly displayed my contempt for him. Now if he'd been in Farrell's organization, or in De Soto's, well, he would have

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drive to my place ostensibly to  
collect some. When I suggested he  
come up for a quick drink he de-  
murred.

"Come on," I insisted. "It won't  
take a minute. Besides, we're a bit  
early for a nightclub, really."

He was pretty cool. He saw I'd  
be suspicious of something or  
another if he continued to refuse,  
so he came.

"Sit down there," I invited, indi-  
cating the chair by the radio.  
"And let's have some music while  
I pour out the drinks, eh?"

For the first time I saw a flicker  
of fear pass across his eyes.

"There's nothing much on," he  
said as casually as possible.

"Don't be deaf," I grinned to him.  
"At this time of night there  
is always plenty of dance music."  
I made a quick move toward the  
set. "Just you listen!"

"No!" His hand intercepted  
mine before it could reach the ON-  
OFF switch. His face was strain-  
ed.

"Why?" I was no longer grin-  
ning. "Incidentally, Jarrow," I ad-  
ded, "I take it you wouldn't want  
me to answer the phone if it  
rings, would you? At least not  
while you're present?" As I said  
that I switched on the radio set.

He caught on immediately. And  
he saw that any attempt at drama  
would be a waste of breath. "Well,  
what are you going to do about  
it?" he asked. His face wasn't as  
strained now.

"Get you to talk, Jarrow," I  
stammered.

"You'll have quite a job on your  
hands."

"Maybe," I said. I turned up the  
volume. As loud as it would go.  
Then I started working on him. In  
the end he talked. He talked  
plenty. Mainly about the plans of  
his new employer, a certain Big  
Boy, to effect a massive takeover.  
A take-over which would crush all  
opposition. Mine included.

I got Jarrow huffed out of  
town in double-time. I also effect-  
ed seating arrangements to ensure  
that his return would not be an  
easy one — I didn't want him to  
tip off his new boss that I was  
wise to everything. Because I had  
some plans to formulate which  
were going to concern this Big  
Boy, frankly.

But before I got down to all  
this I wanted to see Jacqueline  
Marlette first. Maybe it was be-  
cause of a form of guilt-complex  
on my part for even suspecting  
her of rigging up those baby-  
traps. Maybe it was because I had  
once been on very friendly terms  
with her and simply felt, as a  
result of thinking about her, that  
I'd like to pick up our former as-  
sistance again. So I called to see  
her at the night-spot where she  
was doing her act. She had just  
finished when I got there. We  
engaged in some child-chat which  
culminated in me offering to drive  
her home. This she accepted. I  
meant to do just that — drive her  
to her apartment.

On the way there, I suddenly  
found myself asking her if she'd  
like to come up to my place for  
a drink. She gave every appear-  
ance of being enraptured at the  
suggestion. After a couple of  
shots I put down my glass and  
took her in my arms. But I didn't  
kiss her — she kissed me. Im-  
mensely. And, while we were thus  
occupied, the phone rang.

"Forget it, darling," she whis-  
pered into my ear. "Let the thing  
ring."

A horrible little herb of surp-  
rise snatched into my thoughts.  
"Maybe it's somebody important."  
I heard myself reply.

"More important than me, darling!" Her lips were brushing  
against mine. "Let the silly phone  
ring away to itself as long as it  
likes." Her knee — a deep searing  
kiss — acted as a sort of perked  
to her sentence denoting that dis-  
cussion of the matter was now  
closed.

But to me it wasn't. My sus-  
picion had grown to such an ex-  
tent that it couldn't be dismissed  
— my suspicion that Jarrow, de-  
spite the beating-up he'd got, had  
either led on, which was more  
likely, hadn't revealed that she  
too was implicated in some way  
or another. I unscrewed her arms  
from around my neck and stood  
up.

Her eyes were wide. "What's  
wrong, darling?"

"I'll tell you just in a tick," I  
said. "But in the meantime turn on  
that radio there for me, will you?"

"Why? Oh, Jarrow, you are act-  
ing very strangely."

"Never mind how I'm acting." My  
words were practically ground  
out. "Just turn on that radio."

She rose. Her eyes were flash-  
ing. "I think you must be drunk.  
Or mad. Or maybe even both." She  
suddenly turned and switch-  
ed on the set. "Right! There you  
are! And as far as I am concerned  
you can listen to your precious  
radio far—" Her words were cut  
off as I quickly moved forward  
and kissed her.

The open hand which took me  
violently across the face hurt  
badly. "You pig!"

But before she could leave I had  
the explosives, the detonators, the  
wiring, all out for her to see. And  
I was talking. Talking fast,  
trying to cover in a matter of  
seconds all that had happened.  
She listened, still standing. When  
I had finished she said quietly  
and evenly: "And you suspected  
even me?"

I nodded miserably. "I did."

I made no attempt to avoid the  
second swing of that open hand.  
But it didn't hurt. Just short of  
my face, the swing stopped and  
the movement turned into a cov-  
ering one. It was accompanied by  
a kiss. A long hungry kiss.

And very shortly after, I'd for-  
gotten all about that hand sore  
kiss.

In fact I'd forgotten all about  
well-nigh everything . . .









